

Present perfect and past simple

A Starting activities

1 Drawing time lines

Present perfect and past simple

Work on your own. Here are time lines for sentences in the present perfect and past simple. The lines represent the period of time the speaker is thinking about ('the past until now' or 'the past').

Present perfect (the past until now)

PAST NOW

I have worked at Star Electronics for two years.
(I like my job there.)

Past simple (the past)

PAST NOW

I studied maths and science at school. (I liked those subjects.)

Choose which of the two time lines is correct for each sentence and draw it:

- 1 We've lived in London for ten years.
- 2 James left Africa in 1988.
- 3 Tracy has never been to Rome.
- 4 Sophie has made four films in her career so far.
- 5 Julie made four films in the 1980s.

When you have finished, look at Activity note 9 on page 138.

2 Talking about yourself

Present perfect and past simple

- 1 Work on your own. Write as many sentences as you can about yourself and your life using the present perfect and the past simple, like this: *I've taught English for twenty-one years. I lived in Germany from 1977 to 1979.*

- 2 Work in pairs. You want to talk about yourself and so does your partner. If your partner talks for more than a minute or so, interrupt and get the subject back to you and your life as quickly as possible, like this:

A: *I have always been interested in stamps. I have collected them since I was . . .*

B: (interrupting) *Really? I have never collected stamps, but a few years ago I started to buy rock and roll records. I . . .*

- 3 Write down some of your partner's sentences and draw time lines for them.

3 What's happened here?

Present perfect for the present result of a past action

Work in pairs. Look at the pictures and say three or four sentences about what has happened in each of them. Use the present perfect. Examples: *Someone has left a fire burning.* (Picture 1) *Someone has read all her letters.* (Picture 2)



B Grammar guide

- 1 Present perfect**
- We use the **PRESENT** perfect whenever we talk about the past until **NOW**.
Use the present perfect for:
 - a situations that have gone on until now:
I have lived here for the past twenty-five years. (OR I've lived . . .)
 - b repeated actions that have gone on until now:
He has written four books. (OR He's written . . .) (He may write more books.)
 - *Never, ever, yet* and *before* are usually used with the present perfect to talk about the past until now. *Never* describes an action that has not happened until now.
I've never read 'War and Peace'.
Ever is used to ask whether something has happened until now or not.
Have you ever been to Africa?
Yet is used to say that something has not happened until now (negative statement) or to ask whether it has happened until now (question).
I haven't finished my homework yet.
Have you finished your homework yet?
Before with the present perfect can mean 'until now'.
I've never been in love before.
 - We use the **PRESENT** perfect when we talk about the present result (the result **NOW**) of past actions.
The children have eaten all the dinner so there is no food left for us now.
NOTE *Already* and *just* are usually used with the present perfect to talk about the present result of a past action.
Already is used in positive statements.
I've already explained, so you don't have to say anything.
Just is often used to talk about a very recent past action.
Jamie has just come in. Let's tell him what's happened.
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- 2 Past simple**
- We use the past simple whenever we talk about a past, finished situation or action (not the present result of it). Use the past simple to talk about:
- a a single past, finished action or situation:
The children ate all the dinner. They ate the meat, the spaghetti and all the cheese.
(They ate the food in the past.)
When I was five we lived in London.
 - b repeated, finished actions or situations in the past:
When she was young she went to France on holiday every year.
When I was a child we lived in a lot of different countries.
- NOTE** *When, ago, yesterday* and *last week* are usually used with the past simple.
I saw him when I went to Rome.
He died three years ago.
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- 3 Present perfect and past simple**
- We often use the present perfect to 'give the news' and then add more information in the past simple.
The children have eaten all the dinner, so there is no food left for us. They ate the meat, the vegetables and all the cheese.

C Activities

1 How healthy is this class?

Present perfect and past simple

You are going to write part of a questionnaire to find out how healthy the class is.

- 1 Work in pairs or groups. Choose one of the three subjects below. Write seven present perfect and three past simple questions on your subject. Start the questions with: *How much . . . ? How many . . . ? Have you ever . . . ? When did you last . . . ? Which of these . . . ?*
Examples: *Have you ever stayed up all night? How much fried food did you eat last week?*

Subjects

- a Food (Find out if the class has healthy eating habits.)
 - b Sleep and exercise (Find out if the class gets enough sleep and exercise.)
 - c General behaviour (Find out if the class has eaten, drunk or done anything that could harm their health.)
- 2 Ask another pair or group your questions and answer the questions on their questionnaire.
 - 3 Give a report to the whole class about what you found out from your questionnaire. Make a note of any interesting present perfect and simple past sentences that people in the class say.

2 This is your life

Present perfect and past simple

This is your life is a television programme. A well-known person is surprised every week and taken to a party. Guests are introduced from the person's past. Each guest tells an anecdote (an interesting story) about themselves and the famous person when they knew her/him as a child or at school or in early life, or as a colleague, relative, neighbour or friend. As a class, choose a well-known person and in pairs or groups plan and tell a different anecdote about you and the famous person. The anecdotes should cover different stages of the famous person's life (childhood, youth, early fame etc.). The anecdotes must include some present perfect and past simple verbs. List the verbs that you have used.
Examples: *He has always been a good friend to me. She has always tried to . . . He has always been able to . . . I met her when . . .*

3 Looking after Harry

Present perfect and past simple, questions and short answers

Work in pairs, A and B. A has been out for the day (where?) and has had to leave his or her ten-year-old son Harry with B. Harry has spent time at home with B, but B has also taken Harry out somewhere. Before you read your Activity note, decide together where B has taken Harry. Choose one or two of these:
to a fashion show
fishing
to a boxing match
to the cinema
to play in the park
out with a picnic lunch

Person A: Read Activity note 8 on page 138.

Person B: Read Activity note 47 on page 152.

D Accuracy practice

1 Write sentences. Use the present perfect.

- 1 Please come on time, Mick. This is the second time/you/be/late this week.
- 2 /you/ever/try/Richard's home-made cakes? Help yourself!
- 3 How many countries/you/live/in?
- 4 I/already/tell/you/the answer. Why are you asking me again?
- 5 I'm surprised that this car/never/break down/before. It's very old.

2 Choose verbs from the list to complete the sentences. Use the past simple.

have, take (x2), make, do, get up, teach, stay, eat, dance

An old woman is talking about the things she did when she was young.

- 1 When I was young I _____ medicine every winter because I always _____ a terrible cough.
- 2 When I was young we _____ far bigger meals than people do today.
- 3 When I was young we _____ the bus to the nearest village every weekend and _____ with the young men.
- 4 When I was young we never _____ in bed all morning like they do today. We _____ early and _____ all the housework before nine o'clock.
- 5 When I was young I _____ all my own clothes and I _____ my younger brothers and sisters how to do it too.

3 Use the verbs in the list to complete the sentences. Use the past simple or the present perfect.

leave (x3), lose (x2), fly (x2), have, take, eat (x2)

- 1 I _____ never _____ from London to Dublin before.
- 2 We _____ from London Airport to Dublin yesterday. The flight only _____ two hours.
- 3 _____ you _____ anything yet or shall I make you a sandwich?
- 4 _____ you _____ anything at the café yesterday or _____ you only _____ a coffee?
- 5 You won't believe this. Charles _____ Paula! They are getting divorced.
- 6 Chris _____ Pamela in 1990, but they are still friends.
- 7 I _____ my wallet! I must have left it on the bus.
- 8 I _____ my wallet on holiday last year. I _____ it on a bus.

4 Past simple or present perfect in context. Put in the right form of the verb in brackets.

Julie, Sandra and Tom are all students together.

JULIE ¹ _____ (you/see) Tom last night?

SANDRA No, but I ² _____ (just/come) from his house. He's in bed. He ³ _____ (be) very ill in bed for the last three days, actually.

JULIE I'm sorry to hear that. So that's why he ⁴ _____ (not/go) to the dance last night?

SANDRA Yes. The doctor ⁵ _____ (see) him twice now. He's coming again tomorrow. Oh, by the way, Tom ⁶ _____ (send) his love to you when I ⁷ _____ (see) him.