PRESENT PERFECT v/s PAST SIMPLE

A

Study this example situation:

Tom is looking for his key. He can't find it.
He **has lost** his key. *(present perfect)*
This means that he doesn't have his key *now*.

Ten minutes later:

Now Tom **has found** his key. He has it now.
Has he **lost** his key? No, he **has found** it.
Did he **lose** his key? Yes, he **did**.
He **lost** his key *(past simple)*
but now he **has found** it. *(present perfect)*

The present perfect (something **has happened**) is a *present* tense. It always tells us about the situation *now*. 'Tom **has lost** his key' = he doesn't have his key *now* (see Unit 7).

The past simple (something **happened**) tells us only about the *past*. If somebody says 'Tom **lost** his key', this doesn't tell us whether he has the key now or not. It tells us only that he lost his key at some time in the past.

Do *not* use the present perfect if the situation now is different. Compare:

- They**'ve gone** away. They'll be back on Friday. (they are away *now*)
  They **went** away, but I think they're back at home now. (*not* They've gone)
- It **has stopped** raining now, so we don't need the umbrella. (it isn't raining *now*)
  It **stopped** raining for a while, but now it's raining again. (*not* It has stopped)

B

You can use the present perfect for new or recent happenings:

- 'I**'ve repaired** the washing machine. It's working OK now.' 'Oh, that's good.'
- 'Sally **has had** a baby! It's a boy.' 'That's great news.'

Usually, you can also use the past simple:

- I **repaired** the washing machine. It's working OK now.

Use the past simple (*not* the present perfect) for things that are not recent or new:

- Mozart **was** a composer. He **wrote** more than 600 pieces of music.
  (*not* has been ... has written)
- My mother **grew** up in Italy. (*not* has grown)

Compare:

- Did you know that somebody **has invented** a new type of washing machine?
- Who **invented** the telephone? (*not* has invented)

C

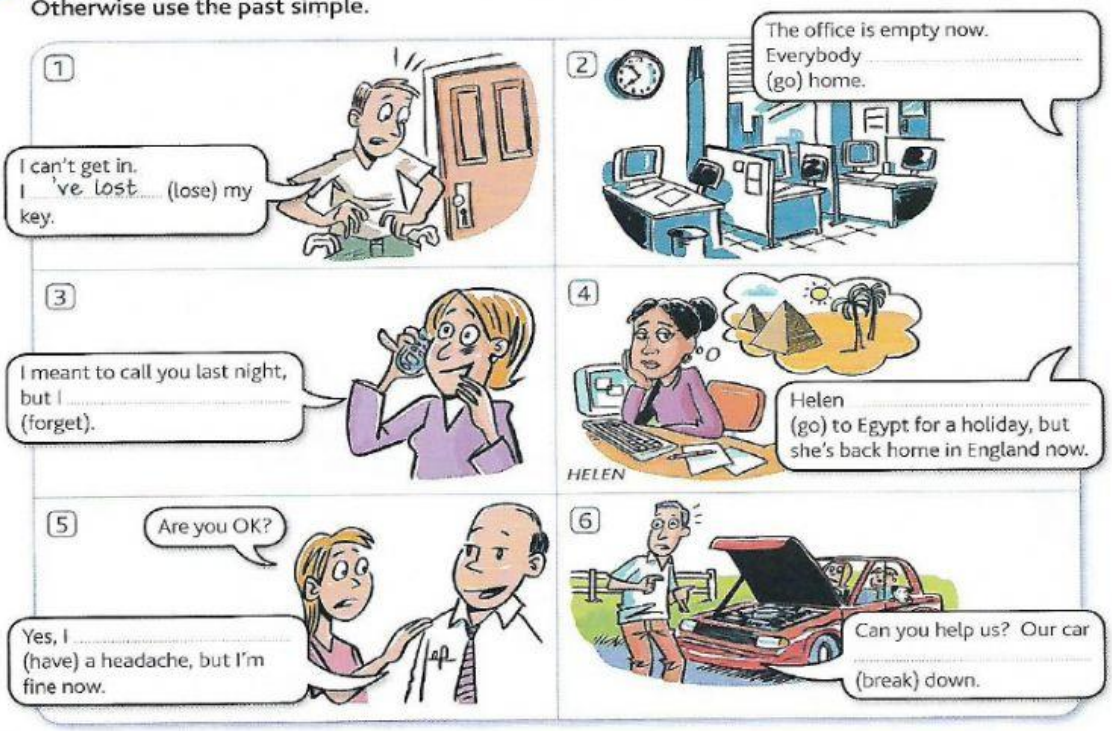
We use the present perfect to give new information (see Unit 7). But if we continue to talk about it, we normally use the past simple:

- A: Ow! I**'ve burnt** myself.
  B: How **did** you **do** that? (*not* have you done)
  A: I **picked** up a hot dish. (*not* have picked)
- A: Look! Somebody **has spilt** something on the sofa.
  B: Well, it **wasn't** me. I **didn't do** it. (*not* hasn't been ... haven't done)

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Exercises

13.1 Complete the sentences using the verbs in brackets. Use the present perfect where possible. Otherwise use the past simple.



13.2 Are the underlined parts of these sentences right or wrong? Correct them where necessary.

1 Did you hear about Sue? She's given up her job. OK
2 My mother has grown up in Italy. grew
3 How many poems has William Shakespeare written?
4 Ow! I've cut my finger. It's bleeding.
5 Drugs have become a big problem everywhere.
6 Who has invented paper?
7 Where have you been born?
8 Ellie isn't at home. She's gone shopping.
9 Albert Einstein has been the scientist who has developed the theory of relativity.

13.3 Put the verb into the correct form, present perfect or past simple.

1 It stopped raining for a while, but now it's raining again. (it / stop)
2 The town where I live is very different now. It has changed a lot. (it / change)
3 I studied German at school, but most of it now. (I / forget)
4 The police three people, but later they let them go. (arrest)
5 What do you think of my English? Do you think ? (it / improve)
6 A: Are you still reading the paper?
B: No, with it. You can have it. (I / finish)
7 for a job as a tourist guide, but I wasn't successful. (I / apply)
8 Where's my bike? outside the house, but it's not there now. (it / be)
9 Quick! We need to call an ambulance. an accident. (there / be)
10 A: Have you heard about Ben? his arm. (he / break)
B: Really? How ? (that / happen)
A: off a ladder. (he / fall)

LIVEWORKSHEETS

A

Do not use the present perfect (**I have done**) when you talk about a *finished* time (for example, **yesterday / ten minutes ago / in 2005 / when I was a child**). Use a past tense:

- It **was** very cold **yesterday**. (*not* has been)
- Paul and Lucy **arrived ten minutes ago**. (*not* have arrived)
- **Did** you **eat** a lot of sweets **when you were a child**? (*not* have you eaten)
- I **got** home late **last night**. I **was** very tired and **went** straight to bed.

Use the past to ask **When** ... ? or **What time** ... ?:

- **When did** your friends **arrive**? (*not* have ... arrived)
- **What time did** you **finish** work?

Compare:

Present perfect

- Tom **has lost** his key. He can't get into the house.
- Is Carla here or **has** she **left**?

Past simple

- Tom **lost** his key **yesterday**. He couldn't get into the house.
- **When did** Carla **leave**?

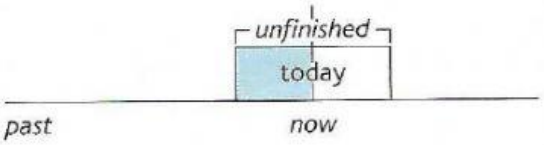
B

Compare:

Present perfect (**have done**)

- **I've done** a lot of work **today**.

We use the present perfect for a period of time that continues *until now*. For example: **today / this week / since 2007**.

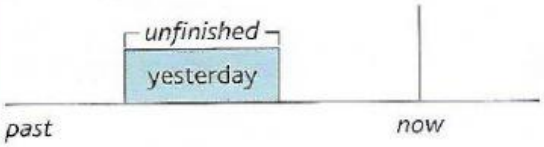


- It **hasn't rained this week**.
- **Have** you **seen** Anna **this morning**? (it is still morning)
- **Have** you **seen** Tim **recently**?
- I don't know where Lisa is. I **haven't seen** her. (= I haven't seen her recently)
- We**'ve been waiting** for an hour. (we are still waiting now)
- Jack lives in Los Angeles. He **has lived** there for seven years.
- I **have never played** golf. (in my life)
- *It's the last day of your holiday. You say:* It**'s been** a really good holiday. I**'ve** really **enjoyed** it.

Past simple (**did**)

- **I did** a lot of work **yesterday**.

We use the past simple for a *finished* time in the past. For example: **yesterday / last week / from 2007 to 2010**.



- It **didn't rain last week**.
- **Did** you **see** Anna **this morning**? (it is now afternoon or evening)
- **Did** you **see** Tim **on Sunday**?
- A: **Was** Lisa at the party **on Sunday**?
  B: I don't think so. **I didn't** see her.
- We **waited** (*or* **were waiting**) for an hour. (we are no longer waiting)
- Jack **lived** in New York for ten years. Now he lives in Los Angeles.
- I **didn't play** golf **last summer**.
- *After you come back from holiday you say:* It **was** a really good holiday. I really **enjoyed** it.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Exercises

14.1 Are the underlined parts of these sentences right or wrong? Correct them where necessary.

1 I've lost my key. I can't find it anywhere. OK
2 Have you eaten a lot of sweets when you were a child? Did you eat
3 I've bought a new car. You must come and see it.
4 I've bought a new car last week.
5 Where have you been yesterday evening?
6 Lucy has left school in 1999.
7 I'm looking for Mike. Have you seen him?
8 'Have you been to Paris?' 'Yes, many times.'
9 I'm very hungry. I haven't eaten much today.
10 When has this book been published?

14.2 Make sentences from the words in brackets. Use the present perfect or past simple.

1 (it / not / rain / this week) It hasn't rained this week.
2 (the weather / be / cold / recently) The weather
3 (it / cold / last week) It
4 (I / not / read / a newspaper yesterday) I
5 (I / not / read / a newspaper today)
6 (Emily / earn / a lot of money / this year)
7 (she / not / earn / so much / last year)
8 (you / have / a holiday recently?)

14.3 Put the verb into the correct form, present perfect or past simple.

1 'What's Madrid like?' 'I don't know. I haven't been (I / not / be) there.'
2 When (I / get) home last night, (I / be) very tired and (I / go) straight to bed.
3 A: (you / see) Lisa recently?
B: Yes, (I / saw) her a few days ago.
4 I'm tired. (I / not / sleep) well last night.
5 The bus drivers were on strike last week. (there / be) no buses.
6 Mr Lee (work) in a bank for 15 years. Then (he / give) it up. Now he works as a gardener.
7 Mary lives in Dublin. (she / live) there all her life.
8 A: (you / go) to the cinema last night?
B: Yes, but (it / be) a mistake. The film (be) awful.
9 My grandfather (die) before I was born. (I / never / meet) him.
10 I don't know Karen's husband. (I / never / meet) him.
11 It's nearly lunchtime, and (I / not / see) Martin all morning. I wonder where he is.
12 'Where do you live?' 'In Boston.'
'How long (you / live) there?' 'Five years.'
'Where (you / live) before that?' 'In Chicago.'
'And how long (you / live) in Chicago?' 'Two years.'

14.4 Write sentences about yourself using the ideas in brackets.

1 (something you haven't done today) I haven't eaten any fruit today
2 (something you haven't done today)
3 (something you didn't do yesterday)
4 (something you did yesterday evening)
5 (something you haven't done recently)
6 (something you've done a lot recently)

LIVEWORKSHEETS