THE SIMPLE PAST TENSE AND THE PRESENT PERFECT TENSE

Use

In British English, the use of Simple Past and Present Perfect is quite strict. As soon as a time expression in the past is given, you have to use Simple Past. If there are no signal words, you must decide if we just talk about an action in the past or if its consequence in the present is important.

Note that the following explanations and exercises refer to **British English** only. In American English, you can normally use Simple Past instead of Present Perfect. We cannot accept this in our exercises, however, as this would lead to confusions amongst those who have to learn the differences.

Certain time in the past or *just / already / yet*? ●○○○○

Do you want to express that an action happened at a certain time in the past (even if it was just a few seconds ago) or that an action has *just / already / not yet* happened?

Simple Past	Present Perfect Simple
certain time in the past *Example:* I phoned Mary 2 minutes ago.	***just / already / not yet*** *Example:* I have just phoned Mary.

Certain event in the past or how often so far? ●○○○○

Do you want to express when a certain action took place or whether / how often an action has happened till now?

Simple Past	Present Perfect Simple
certain event in the past *Example:* He went to Canada last summer.	**whether / how often till now** *Example:* Have you ever been to Canada? / I have been to Canada twice.

Emphasis on action or result? ●●○○○

Do you just want to express what happened in the past? Or do you want to emphasise the result (a past action's consequence in the present)?

Simple Past	Present Perfect Simple
Emphasis on action *Example:* I bought a new bike. *(just telling what I did in the past.)*	**Emphasis on result** *Example:* I have bought a new bike. *(With this sentence I actually want to express that I have a new bike now.)*

Signal Words ●●○○○

Simple Past	Present Perfect Simple
▪ yesterday ▪ ... ago ▪ in 1990 ▪ the other day ▪ last ...	▪ just ▪ already ▪ up to now ▪ until now / till now ▪ ever / never ▪ (not) yet ▪ so far ▪ lately / recently

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Form ●○○○○

Write down the correct form (pronoun + verb).

	Simple Past	Present Perfect Simple
I / open	_____	_____
he / write	_____	_____
they / do	_____	_____
you / swim	_____	_____
she / give	_____	_____

Use

When do we use which tense?

1. 'Already' is a signal word for ... [ ]
2. 'Just' is a signal word for ... [ ]
3. '2 years ago' is a signal word for ... [ ]
4. 'Yet' is a signal word for ... [ ]
5. 'Yesterday' is a signal word for ... [ ]

Positive Sentences

Put the verbs into the correct tense (simple past or present perfect simple).

1. Mary (win) _____ the lottery last year.
2. We (prepare / already) _____ dinner.
3. James (find) _____ your ring in the garden yesterday.
4. He (come / just) _____ home.
5. They (buy) _____ their car two years ago.

Negative Sentences

Put the verbs into the correct tense (simple past or present perfect simple).

1. I (see / not) _____ anyone yet.
2. Phil (go / not) _____ to the cinema last night.
3. We (be / not) _____ to the zoo so far.
4. She (arrive / not) _____ yet.
5. Emily (visit / not) _____ me last week.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Questions

Put the verbs into the correct tense (simple past or present perfect simple).

1. (you / read) _____ the book yet?
2. How many letters (they / write) _____ so far?
3. When (he / tell) _____ you that?
4. (you / be) _____ at home last night?
5. How often (you / travel) _____ abroad till now?

Text

Put the verbs into the correct tense (simple past or present perfect simple).

1. A: (you / taste / ever) _____ sushi?
2. B: Yes, I (eat) _____ sushi at least five times so far.
3. A: When (you / eat) _____ sushi for the first time?
4. B: I (eat) _____ sushi for the first time on my dad's 50th birthday. He (invite) _____ the whole family to a Japanese restaurant.
5. A: (you / like) _____ it?
6. B: Absolutely. In fact, it (be) _____ so good that we (be) _____ to that restaurant three times yet. And on my mum's birthday, we (order) _____ some sushi and (have) _____ it at home.

LIVEWORKSHEETS