

## 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*)

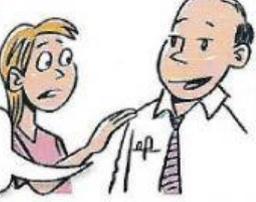
C

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*)

# Exercises

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

<p>1</p>  <p>I can't get in. I <u>ve lost</u> (lose) my key.</p>	<p>2</p>  <p>The office is empty now. Everybody (go) home.</p>
<p>3</p>  <p>I meant to call you last night, but I (forget).</p>	<p>4</p>  <p>HELEN</p> <p>Helen (go) to Egypt for a holiday, but she's back home in England now.</p>
<p>5</p>  <p>Are you OK?</p> <p>Yes, I (have) a headache, but I'm fine now.</p>	<p>6</p>  <p>Can you help us? Our car (break) down.</p>

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

- Did you hear about Sue? She's given up her job. OK
- My mother has grown up in Italy. grew
- How many poems has William Shakespeare written?
- Ow! I've cut my finger. It's bleeding.
- Drugs have become a big problem everywhere.
- Who has invented paper?
- Where have you been born?
- Ellie isn't at home. She's gone shopping.
- 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.

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

**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**?

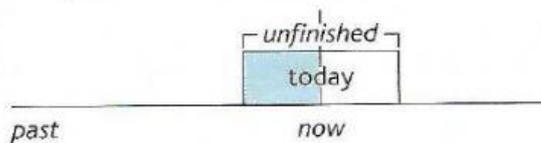
**B**

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**.

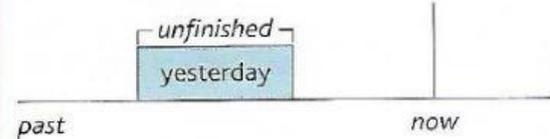


- It **hasn't** rained **this week**.
- Have you seen** Anna **this morning**? (it is still morning)
- Have you seen** Tim **recently**?
- I don't know where Lisa is. I **haven't seen** her. (= I haven't seen her recently)
- We've **been waiting** for an hour. (we are still waiting now)
- Jack lives 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.*

# 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) \_\_\_\_\_