

GRAMMAR

PRESENT PERFECT VS SIMPLE PAST

Find your ancestors online

We can answer a present perfect question with the simple past tense when a specific time is introduced in the answer. If a specific time is not known or necessary, we answer with the present perfect.

EXAMPLES	EXPLANATION
Have you ever used Google? Answer A: Yes. I've used Google many times. Answer B: Yes. I used Google a few hours ago.	Answer A, with <i>many times</i> , shows repetition at an indefinite time. Answer B, with <i>a few hours ago</i> , shows a specific time in the past.
Have you ever heard of DNA test? Answer A: No. I've never heard of it. Answer B: Yes. I read about it yesterday.	Answer A, with <i>never</i> , shows continuation from past to present. Answer B, with <i>yesterday</i> , shows a specific time in the past.
Have you done your homework yet? Answer A: Yes. I've done it already. Answer B: Yes. I did it this morning.	Answer A, with <i>already</i> , is indefinite. Answer B, with <i>this morning</i> , shows a specific time.
Have Bill Gates and Steve jobs become rich? Answer A: Yes, they have . Answer B: Yes. They became rich before they were 35 years old.	Answer A shows no time reference. Answer B, with <i>before they were 35 years old</i> , refers to a specific time.

Fill in the blanks with the correct tense of the verb in parentheses ().

A: Your Spanish is a little different from my Spanish. Where are you from?

B: I'm from Guatemala.

A: How long have you been (example: you/be) here?

B: I (only/be) here for about six months. Where are you from?

A: Miami. My family comes from Cuba. They (leave) Cuba in 1962, after the revolution. I (be) born in the U.S. I'm starting to become interested in my family's history. I (read) several magazine articles about genealogy so far. It's fascinating. Are you interested in your family's history?

B: Of course I am. I _____ (be) interested in it for a long time. I _____ (work) on a family tree for many years.

A: When _____ (you/start)?

B: I _____ (start) when I _____ (be) 16 years old. Over the years, I _____ (find) a lot of interesting information about my family. Some of my ancestors were Mayans and some were from Spain and France. In fact, my great-great grandfather was a Spanish prince.

A: How _____ (you/find) all that information?

B: I _____ (use) the Internet a lot. I _____ (also/go) to many libraries to get more information.

A: _____ (you/ever/go) to Spain or France to look at records there?

B: Last summer I _____ (go) to Spain, and I _____ (find) a lot of information while I was there.

A: How many ancestors _____ (you/find) so far?

B: So far I _____ (find) about 50, but I'm still looking.

A: How can I get started?

B: There's a great site called Cyndi's List. I'll give you the address, and you can get started there.

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