

Present perfect

Explanations

Recent events

Present perfect simple

The present perfect simple is used to describe recent events.

I've left my shopping bag behind.

The event happened in the past, but there is a result in the present.

I've broken my arm, as you can see.

No definite time is given for the event, but to emphasise the idea of recentness we can use *just*.

I've just broken my watch.

We can also describe events that have not happened.

I haven't found her phone number yet.

Indefinite events

■ Present perfect simple

No definite time is given for the events. They are a series of actions in our life up to now.

I've been to France three times.

After *It's/This is the first/second time* we use the present perfect. It also refers to our life up to now.

This is the first time I have eaten Japanese food.

■ Compared with past simple

Events described using the past simple have definite times.

I went to France last year.

I ate at a Japanese restaurant on Saturday.

If we think of a definite place for an event, this may suggest a definite time.

I left my shopping bag on the train.

Extended or repeated events

■ Present perfect simple

The present perfect simple describes a state which lasts up to the present.

I've lived in this house for five years.

The present perfect simple can describe a habitual action in a period of time up to the present.

I've never worn a tie to work, and I refuse to start now!

■ Present perfect continuous

The present perfect continuous can also describe a state which lasts up to the present moment.

I've been living in this house for five years.

There is little difference in meaning between simple and continuous in this case, or with *How long* questions.

How long have you lived/been living in this house?

The verbs *wait, sit, lie, stay* prefer the present perfect continuous.

I've been waiting for ages.

FIRST CERTIFICATE LANGUAGE PRACTICE

For, since, ago

See Grammar 14 for contrast between these time expressions.

Present perfect
simple or
continuous?

■ Completed action

The present perfect simple can show that an action is complete.

I've finished my homework!

If we say *how many* or *how much* we use the simple form. A certain amount has been completed.

I've written ten pages of my homework!

■ Not completed

The present perfect continuous can show that an action is not completed, or that it has finished recently.

We've been walking for hours! Let's have a rest.

I've been digging the garden. That's why I'm so dirty!

■ Present result or action in progress

We use the present perfect simple if our attention is on the present result.

I've written my homework. Now I can watch the television.

We use the present perfect continuous if our attention is on the action in progress.

I've been writing my homework all evening! I didn't know it would take so long.

Practice

1 Choose a suitable description for each picture.

a)



- 1) Did you enjoy the match?
- 2) Have you enjoyed the match?

b)



- 1) What have you been doing?
- 2) What have you done?

c)



- 1) He was married six times.
- 2) He has been married six times.

d)



- 1) How long have you been here?
- 2) How long are you here for?

e)



- 1) I've been waiting for two hours.
- 2) I waited for two hours.

f)



- 1) Where did Wendy go?
- 2) Where has Wendy been?

2 Underline the most suitable verb form in each sentence.

- a) Did you see/Have you seen my bag anywhere? I can't find it.
- b) Larry is writing/has been writing/has written his novel for the last two years.
- c) From the minute he got up this morning Gary asked/has asked/has been asking silly questions!
- d) Have you given/Did you give Helen my message when you have seen/saw her?
- e) Sorry, could you say that again? I didn't listen/haven't listened/haven't been listening to you.
- f) The police think that they found/have found your wallet, so call this number.
- g) Did you two meet/Have you two met before? Eric, this is Amanda.
- h) Did you meet/Have you met anyone interesting at the reception?

3 Put each verb in brackets into a suitable verb form.

- a) I'm sorry about not coming last week. I (have) had a cold and so I (stay) at home.
- b) Wait a minute! I (have) an idea. Let's go and see Roger. We last (see) him a long time ago.
- c) It's nice to be back here in London. This is the second time I (come) here.
- d) I'm phoning about your bicycle for sale, which I (see) in the local paper. (you sell) it? Or is it still available?
- e) This place is in a terrible mess! What on earth (you do) ?
- f) And now for an item of local news. Hampshire police (find) the dangerous snake which (go) missing earlier in the week.
- g) This tooth (kill) me lately! So I (make) an appointment with the dentist for next Tuesday.
- h) I can't give you the report I (promise) for today because I (not finish) it.

4 Underline the most suitable time expression.

- a) I haven't seen Gerry for/since a long time. How is he?
- ⊖ b) It's ages ago/since I last went to a football match.
- c) I've written to Deborah last week/recently.
- d) What have you been doing today/yesterday?
- e) Have you eaten Italian food before/already?
- f) I've been living here in/since the end of last year.
- g) Actually I had dinner with Sue last night/lately.
- h) I've been trying to get in touch with David for ages/for the last time.
- i) Terry hasn't been to Edinburgh since/when we went there together.
- j) I can't remember how long/when I've had this watch.

5 Complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first sentence, using the word given. Do not change the word given. You must use between two and five words, including the word given.

a) Steve started learning the violin a month ago.

learning

Steve *has been learning* the violin for a month.

b) I haven't been to an Indian restaurant for ages.

since

It's ages an Indian restaurant.

c) When she heard the results, Mary began to feel more confident.

become

Since hearing the results more confident.

d) The last time Nancy came here was in 1986.

since

Nancy hasn't 1986.

e) This is my first visit to Japan.

time

This is the first to Japan.

f) How long have Helen and Robert been married?

get

When married?

g) Jack bought those trousers last month, and has been wearing them ever since.

for

Jack has a month.

h) It's a long time since our last conversation.

spoken

We long time.

i) Thanks, but I had something to eat earlier.

already

Thanks, but I've eat.

j) This is my first game of water-polo.

played

I before.