

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.

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

- 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.
- My mother has grown up in Italy.
- 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.

OK

grew

- 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 forgot most of it now. (I / forget)
- The police arrested three people, but later they let them go. (arrest)
- What do you think of my English? Do you think it's improved? (it / improve)
- A: Are you still reading the paper?
B: No, I finished with it. You can have it. (I / finish)
- I applied for a job as a tourist guide, but I wasn't successful. (I / apply)
- Where's my bike? It was outside the house, but it's not there now. (it / be)
- Quick! We need to call an ambulance. There was an accident. (there / be)
- A: Have you heard about Ben? He broke his arm. (he / break)
B: Really? How did it happen? (that / happen)
A: He fell 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**.

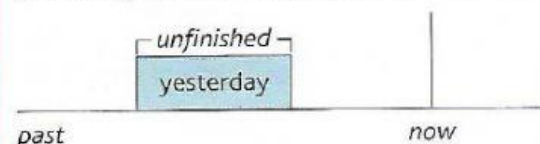


- ☐ It **hasn't** rained **this week**.
- ☐ **Have you seen** Anna **this morning**? (it is still morning)
- ☐ **Have you seen** Tim **recently**?
- ☐ I don't know where Lisa is. I **haven't seen** her. (= I haven't seen her recently)
- ☐ We've **been waiting** for an hour. (we are still waiting now)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