

## PRESENT PERFECT VERSUS PAST SIMPLE: An overview

### Unit

### 3

#### Past simple and present perfect

##### A

Time expressions that refer to the present, such as **this morning / week / month** and **today**, can be used with either past simple or present perfect verbs.

Reminder → A6–A12

If we think of **this morning** (etc.) as a past, completed time period, then we use the past simple; if we think of **this morning** (etc.) as a time period which includes the present moment, then we use the present perfect. Compare:

- I **didn't shave** *this morning*. (= the morning is over and I didn't shave) *and*
- I **haven't shaved** *this morning*. (= it is still the morning and I might shave later)

##### B

In a sentence which includes a time clause with **since**, we generally prefer a past simple verb in the time clause and a present perfect verb in the main clause. The time clause refers to a particular point in the past:

- Since* Mr Dodson **became** president **unemployment has increased**. (*rather than ... has become ...*)
- She **hasn't been able** to play tennis *since* she **broke** her arm. (*rather than ... has broken ...*)

Note, however, that we use the present perfect in the time clause if the two situations described in the main clause and time clause extend until the present:

- Have** you **met** any of your neighbours *since* you've **lived** here? (*not ... you lived ...*)

##### C

With time clauses introduced by **after**, **when**, **until**, **as soon as**, **once**, **by the time** and the time expressions **the minute / second / moment** the past simple refers to past, completed events and the present perfect refers to future events. Compare these examples:

- After* she **left** hospital (past), she **had** a long holiday. *and*
- After* Lucas **has left** school (future), he **will be** spending six months in India.
- The minute* I **got** the news about Anna (past) I **telephoned** my parents. *and*
- I'll contact you *the minute* I've **got** my exam results. (future)

In the time clause in sentences like this it is possible to use the past perfect instead of the past simple (e.g. *After she had left ...*) and the present simple instead of the present perfect (e.g. *After Lucas leaves ...*) with the same meaning (see also Unit 5).

### Exercises

### Unit

### 3

#### 3.1

Complete each sentence with a verb from the box. Use the present perfect or past simple, with a negative form where necessary. **A**

have go oversleep read spend wear

- 1 A: Shall I make us some dinner? It's already eight o'clock.  
B: No, thanks. I **overslept** *this morning* and my mouth hurts too much to eat anything.
- 2 I **have** *three lectures* today and I still have two more later this afternoon.
- 3 It was so hot today that I **wore** shorts and a T-shirt at work.
- 4 We **spent** £200 on food this month and there's another week to go before I get paid.
- 5 A: Do you want a lift home?  
B: No, I **haven't read** this morning because my alarm clock didn't go off, so I need to work late.
- 6 I **haven't done** much of the report yet, but I have to finish it by the weekend.

#### 3.2

Complete the sentences with the pairs of verbs from the box. Choose the most appropriate tense — present perfect or past simple. **B**

be able – feel      happen – speak      improve – be  
not want – fall      rescue – be      work – not have

- 1 Maria **has been able to** go swimming since she **fell** in the river.
- 2 Since she **has been able to** at the company she **has had** a day off through illness.
- 3 Since he **has been able to** the girl from a house fire, he **has been speaking to** on TV almost every day.
- 4 A lot **has been able to** since I **last fell** to you.
- 5 Since I **haven't been able to** drive I **haven't been able to** much more independent.
- 6 Stefan's reading **has improved** enormously since he **has been able to** at school.

#### 3.3

One sentence in each pair is wrong. Correct it by replacing the past simple with the present perfect of the italicised verb. **C**

- 1 a Remember that after you **signed** the contract you won't be able to change your mind.  
b Carlo's injury only became apparent after he **signed** to play for Real Madrid.
- 2 a As soon as I **finished** college I want to travel around Australia.  
b I didn't have time to check the essay. I handed it in as soon as I **finished** it.
- 3 a By the time Sarah **got** to work the meeting had finished.  
b I'll probably have finished breakfast by the time the children **got** up.
- 4 a I recognised her the moment I **heard** her laugh.  
b I'll tell you what time we're coming the moment I **hear** from Emil.

## PRESENT PERFECT VERSUS PAST SIMPLE: An overview

### **LISTENING ACTIVITY:**

- Listen to the following conversation between Steve and his friend.
- Answer to the questions below:

#### **PART A: Sortable answers**

1. Have they ever eaten snails?
2. When did Steve's friend eat them?
3. Has she ever eaten fried brains?
4. Steve's friend impression about fried brains was \_\_\_\_\_.

#### **PART B: Cloze answers: Write a word for these statements.**

5. Did she like snails?
6. Did he like the brains?
7. Steve said fried brains were \_\_\_\_\_ for him.
8. Instead, he ordered a \_\_\_\_\_, with \_\_\_\_\_ and a large \_\_\_\_\_.