

## PRESENT PERFECT OR PAST SIMPLE

<b>Main theme addressed</b>	In this lesson, you will learn how to know when to use Past Simple and when to use Present Perfect.
<b>Key Goals</b>	<p>Here is an outline of what you will learn today:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The use of tenses for finished and unfinished actions</li> <li>2. The use with finished actions in someone's life (alive or dead)</li> <li>3. The use with a finished action with or with no result in the present</li> <li>4. The use with a finished time word or unfinished time word</li> <li>5. Some additional tips for using Present Perfect</li> <li>6. Special tip to choose between Past Simple and Present Perfect</li> </ol>

The use of the **Past Simple** and the **Present Perfect** can be a bit confusing for foreign learners of English.

Below you will find some tips of how to recognize the difference between these two tenses.

The items in the tables are the different uses that we can make of those tenses and can help you learn when to use each of them.

## 1. The use of tenses for finished and unfinished actions

PAST SIMPLE	PRESENT PERFECT
<p><b>Finished actions</b></p> <p>Example: I had that car for ten years (but I don't have it anymore).</p>	<p><b>Unfinished actions that started in the past and continue to the present</b></p> <p>Example: I have had this car for ten years (I still have it).</p>

### Exercise:

In the following sentences, you will have to choose between two tenses: the present perfect or the past simple. Circle the correct verb form in each sentence.

1. I **had** / **have had** my cat Rosie for ten years, but she died last year.
2. They **went** / **have gone** to Paris and they are still not back.
3. She **owned** / **has owned** this shop for ten years and it is still open.

Answers:

1. had
2. have gone
3. has owned

## 2. The use with finished actions in someone's life (alive or dead)

<p><b>A finished action in someone's life</b></p> <p><b>(if the person is dead):</b></p> <p>Example: Shakespeare wrote many plays (and he will not write anymore, since he is dead).</p>	<p><b>A finished action in someone's life</b></p> <p><b>(if the person is still alive)</b></p> <p>Example: He has written 10 books (and he will probably write more, because he is still alive).</p>
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### Exercise:

In the following sentences, you will have to choose between two tenses: the present perfect or the past simple. Circle the correct verb form in each sentence.

1. He is the most amazing person; **he published / has published** so many books.
2. He was the most amazing person; he **published / has published** so many books.
3. His dad died last week; he was a poet and he **wrote / has written** many beautiful poems.
4. Keanu Reeves **starred / has starred** in many movies.

Answers:

1. Has published
2. Published
3. Wrote
4. Has starred

### 3. The use with a finished action with or with no result in the present

<p><b>A finished action with no result in the present</b></p> <p><b>NOTE:</b> the exact time of the action in the past <b>is</b> given</p> <p>Example: I broke my leg last year (my leg is not broken anymore).</p>	<p><b>A finished action when a result is seen in the present</b></p> <p><b>NOTE:</b> the exact time of the action in the past <b>is not</b> given</p> <p>Example: I have broken my leg (the result is my broken leg).</p>
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#### Exercise:

In the following sentences, you will have to choose between two tenses: the present perfect or the past simple. Circle the correct verb form in each sentence.

1. I **bought** / **have bought** a car last week.
2. He **lost** / **has lost** his wallet and he still hasn't found it.
3. I **found** / **have found** a small mushroom, isn't it beautiful?

Answers:

1. bought
2. has lost
3. have found

#### 4. The use with a finished time word or unfinished time word

<p><b>With a finished time word</b></p> <p>Example: I was on holidays last week.</p>	<p><b>With an unfinished time word (for example: this week, this month...)</b></p> <p>Example: I have been on holidays this week.</p>
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#### Exercise:

In the following sentences, you will have to choose between two tenses: the present perfect or the past simple. Circle the correct verb form in each sentence.

1. He **was** / **has been** here last week.
2. He **was** / **has been** here before.
3. I **visited** / **have visited** him this week.
4. I **washed** / **have washed** the car last week.

Answers:

1. was
2. has been
3. have visited
4. washed

## 5. Some additional tips for using present perfect

- **to express a repeated action – an action that has happened more than once in the past**

Examples:

I have seen this man three times before.

He has read this book many times.

- **with the words “for” and “since”**

These are adverbs which tell about the duration of an activity answer the question “how long?”

Examples:

He has lived here since 2010.

He has studied English for ten years.

- **with the negative adverb “never”**

This adverb is used when we wish to express something that we have never done before.

Examples:

I have never been to London.

I have never eaten a snail before.

- **in questions with adverb “ever”**

Examples:

Have you ever visited Spain?

Have you ever seen a prettier girl?

## 6. Special tip for recognizing between Present Perfect and Past Simple

Adverbs can help you in recognizing when to use the Present Perfect and when to use the Past Simple.

Here is the list of the most common adverbs for each tense:

PAST SIMPLE	PRESENT PERFECT
yesterday, ago, in + certain year in the past, on + certain date in the past, in the past, once upon a time...	already, never, ever, recently, since, for, just, yet...

### Exercise:

In the following sentences, you will have to choose between two tenses: the present perfect or the past simple. Circle the correct verb form in each sentence.

1. He **visited / has** visited Paris in 2010.
2. **Did they be / have they been** to Australia already?
3. **They recently visited / they have recently visited** her.
4. She **cooked / has cooked** lunch yesterday.

Answers:

1. visited
2. Have they been
3. They have recently visited
4. cooked



**Learn more:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ppFv1hIMHjI>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hqX8gANPN-E>

<https://www.slideshare.net/anamile438/time-expressions-present-perfect-past-simple-36441236>