



Present Perfect vs Past Simple

These two tenses are often confused because they both refer to **past events** — but they focus on **different aspects of time**.



1. Present Perfect (have/has + past participle)



Structure:

Subject + have/has + past participle (3rd form)



Use:

- Actions with a **result in the present**
- **Unfinished time periods** (e.g., today, this week)
- **Life experience** (no time given)
- **Recent events** (usually with *just, already, yet*)
- **Actions that started in the past and continue now**



Focus:

Connection to the present

(the exact time of the action is not important or not mentioned)



Time Expressions:

- **ever, never, just, already, yet, for, since**
- **so far, recently, lately, still**



Examples:

- I **have visited** Paris three times.
 - She **hasn't finished** her homework **yet**.
 - We **have known** each other **since** 2010.
 - He **has just left** the office.
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2. Past Simple (verb + -ed / irregular form)



Structure:

Subject + verb in past form (regular or irregular)

(Use *did* for negatives and questions)

Use:

- Actions that happened at a **specific time in the past**
- **Finished time periods** (e.g., yesterday, last year)
- A **sequence of completed events** in the past
- **Stories, chronological accounts**, historical events

Focus:

When the action **happened** is important.
It's **clearly in the past** and **over**.



Time Expressions:

- **yesterday, last week/month/year**
- **in 1999, two days ago, when I was a child**
- **then, after that, suddenly**

Examples:

- I **visited** Paris in 2020.
- She **didn't finish** her homework **yesterday**.
- We **met** at a conference **last year**.

Key Differences: Present Perfect vs Past Simple

Feature	Present Perfect	Past Simple
Time reference	Unspecified or connected to the present	Specific time in the past
Time expressions	ever, just, already, yet, since, for	yesterday, last year, ago, in 2000
Focus	Result or experience	Completed past action
Can use with "since/for"?	 Yes	 No
Finished or unfinished time?	Unfinished (this week, today)	Finished (last week, yesterday)
Example	I've lost my keys. (now I can't open the door)	I lost my keys yesterday. (but I found them)

Watch Out For:

- “I have been to Paris in 2018” ❌ → Wrong! Use **Past Simple** because the time is specific.
 - “I went to Paris” ✅ (in 2018)
 - “I have been to Paris” ✅ (no time mentioned)
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Typical Contrast Examples:

❌ Incorrect

✅ Correct

I have seen that movie yesterday. I saw that movie yesterday.

Did you ever go to Italy?

Have you ever been to Italy?

I have met him last year.

I met him last year.

I lived here since 2010.

I have lived here since 2010.