

Simple Past vs. Present Perfect

When do we use each
tense in English?



Remember:

Grammar has meaning!

Different grammar tenses are used in different situations or contexts and they carry different meanings.

For example . . .



◆ Use the simple past for action that happened in the past and is:

over, done, finished!

◆ Use the present perfect for action that started in the past, but ...

is still true today.

A stylized teal mountain range illustration with diagonal hatching, located at the bottom right of the slide.

- ◆ The **simple past** always refers to an action or situation that is finished.
- ◆ The **present perfect** *connects* the past and the present. It is used to show that an action or situation in the past:
 - continues today, OR
 - might happen again



Compare the meaning of these two sentences:

1. Sara lived in Boston for 5 years.
2. Sara has lived in Boston for 5 years.

The first sentence uses:
Simple Past

The second sentence uses:
Present Perfect

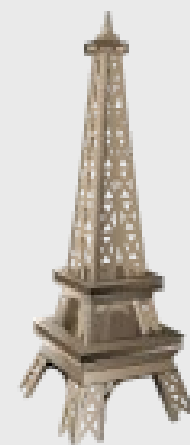
A stylized teal mountain range graphic is located in the bottom right corner of the slide, extending from the bottom edge and partially under the 'Present Perfect' text.

Sara lived in Boston for 5 years.

Meaning: by using the simple past tense, we mean that Sara started living in Boston 5 years ago . . .

AND . . . then she moved!

Now she lives in a different city, like Paris.



Remember, the simple past is used for a situation that is over, finished, done!



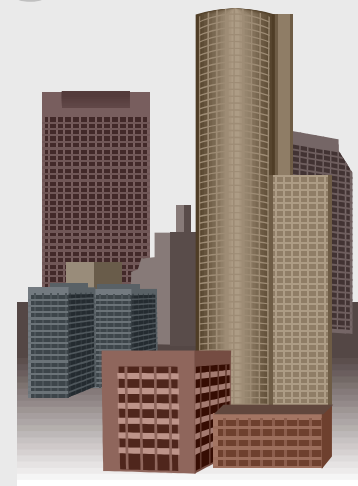
Sara has lived in Boston for 5 years.

Meaning: by using the present perfect tense, we mean that Sara began living in Boston 5 years ago .

. .

AND . . . she still lives there.

Remember, present perfect:
connects the past with the present.



◆ Use the simple past with time words like:

- **yesterday**
- **last** Saturday, week, month, year, etc.
- **ago**
- **when I was...**
- **in 1990** (past date)

◆ Use the present perfect with time words like:

- **recently/lately**
- **since ...**
- **so far this**
week, month, year, etc.



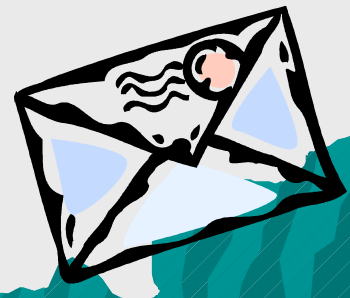
Additional notes about present perfect:

- We often use present perfect to say that something happened sooner than expected.

Example:

Jan: Don't forget to mail that letter.

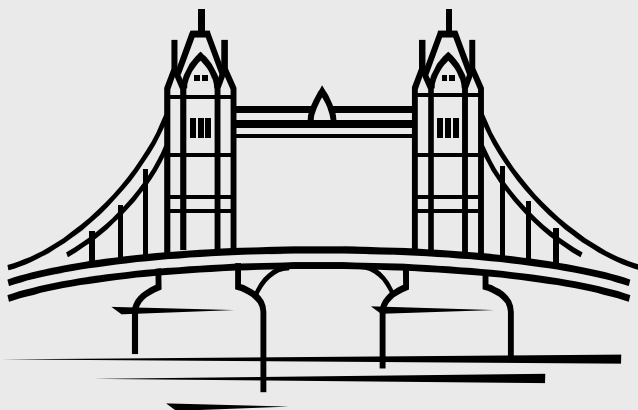
Tom: I've *already* mailed it.



- We often use present perfect to say that we have never done something at any time in the past.

Example:

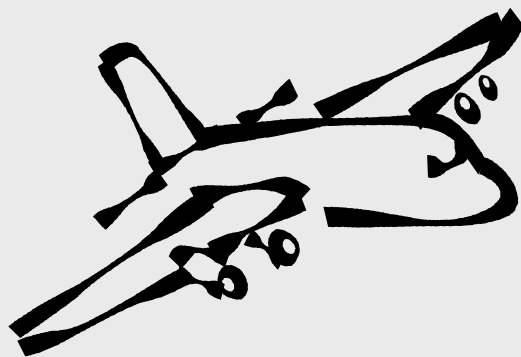
I have never visited London. But someday, I hope to travel there.



- We often use present perfect with the expression: "This is the first time."

Example:

Leonard is nervous. This is the first time he has flown on an airplane!



- We often use present perfect with "ever" and "never."

Example:

Patricia: Have you ever played tennis?

Linda: No, I've never played before, but I would like to learn!



Remember!

If you are talking about a specific time in the past (yesterday, last month, etc.), you cannot use the present perfect.

In these cases, use the simple past.



For

Affirmative

He / She / It

+ HAS + Past Participle (=3rd column)

I / You / We / They

+HAVE + Past Participle (=3rd column)



Negative

He / She / It

+ HASN'T + Past Participle (=3rd column)

I / You / We / They

+HAVEN'T + Past Participle (=3rd column)



INTERROGATIVE

HAS + HE / SHE / IT + Past Participle (=3rd column)...?

HAVE + I / YOU / WE / THEY + Past Participle(=3rd column)...?



Practice!

Do these exercises with your class.

Choose the simple past or present perfect and talk about why each is necessary.

1. When I was a child, I _____ (swim) a lot.
 2. So far this week, we _____ (study) a lot.
 3. Theo _____ (be) very sick recently.
 4. I _____ (have) a terrible headache yesterday.
 5. It _____ (rain) a lot lately.
 6. They _____ (get) married ten years ago.
 7. I _____ (be) to Balboa Park many times.
- 

Answers!

1. When I was a child, I swam a lot.
 2. So far this week, we have studied a lot.
 3. Theo has been very sick recently.
 4. I had a terrible headache yesterday.
 5. It has rained a lot lately.
 6. They got married ten years ago.
 7. I have been to Balboa Park many times. (possibly again in the future)
 8. My family took a vacation last year.
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For more practice,

1) Go to our class website:

www.ecc6.blogspot.com

2) On the right side, click on Grammar Site. Then click on 410.

3) Click on Grammar, and then go down the page to Verbs. Click on the **present perfect** for explanation and practice.

