

Present Perfect vs. Past Simple: Time & Results

INTERMEDIATE

Focus: New information, Connection to now, Recent happenings, Current situation, Yesterday, Last week, Specific time points, Completed past actions, Today vs. Yesterday, This week vs. Last week

When speaking English, choosing between the **Present Perfect** and the **Past Simple** often depends on the **time period** and the **result**.

1. Present Perfect: Unfinished Time & Recent Results

We use the Present Perfect (have/has + past participle) when the time period is not finished or when a past action has a direct result now.

- **Unfinished Time:** The time period is still happening (e.g., *today, this week, this month, in my life*).
 - *Example:* I **have worked** hard **today**. (It is still today).
- **Recent Happenings / News:** To announce new information or recent events.
 - *Example:* **Have** you **heard**? Sarah **has won** the lottery!
- **Connection to Now (Result):** Something happened in the past, but the result is important *now*.
 - *Example:* I **have lost** my keys. (Result: I cannot enter my house *now*).

2. Past Simple: Finished Time & History

We use the Past Simple (verb-ed or irregular form) when the time period is completely finished. There is no connection to the present moment.

- **Finished Time:** The time period is over (e.g., *yesterday, last week, in 1999, two days ago*).
 - *Example:* I **worked** hard **yesterday**. (Yesterday is finished).
- **Specific Time Points:** When we ask "When?" or state exactly when something happened.
 - *Example:* **When did** you **arrive**? I **arrived** at 6:00 PM.
- **Historical Events:** Facts about people who are dead or events in history.
 - *Example:* Shakespeare **wrote** Romeo and Juliet.

3. Conversational Tense Shifting

It is common to start a conversation with the **Present Perfect** (to introduce a topic) and switch to the **Past Simple** (to give details).

- A: **Have** you **seen** the new Marvel movie? (Topic/Experience)
- B: Yes, I **saw** it last night. (Detail/Specific Time)

Practice Exercises

Instructions: Complete the sentences using the correct form of the verb (Present Perfect or Past Simple). Pay attention to the time expressions.

1. I cannot find my wallet. I think I _____ (lose) it.
2. _____ (you/see) the football match last night?
3. Look! The ambulance _____ (just/arrive).
4. We _____ (not/go) to the cinema last month.
5. _____ (you/finish) your project yet?
6. They _____ (live) in Paris for five years, but they moved to London in 2020.
7. I am so hungry. I _____ (not/eat) anything today.
8. Thomas Edison _____ (invent) the light bulb.
9. Where _____ (you/put) the remote control? I want to watch TV now.
10. She _____ (not/call) me yesterday because she was busy.
11. _____ (you/ever/be) to Japan?
12. We _____ (have) a lot of meetings this week.
13. My grandfather _____ (not/fight) in World War II; he was too young.
14. Oh no! Someone _____ (break) the window. There is glass everywhere.
15. What time _____ (they/leave) the party on Saturday?

Answer Key

1. **have lost** (Focus: Result now)
2. **Did you see** (Focus: Finished time - last night)
3. **has just arrived** (Focus: Recent happening)
4. **did not go / didn't go** (Focus: Finished time - last month)
5. **Have you finished** (Focus: Connection to now/yet)
6. **lived** (Focus: Finished period - they moved away)
7. **have not eaten / haven't eaten** (Focus: Unfinished time - today)
8. **invented** (Focus: Historical event)
9. **have you put** (Focus: Result now - implies it is still lost)
10. **did not call / didn't call** (Focus: Finished time - yesterday)
11. **Have you ever been** (Focus: Life experience/Unfinished time)
12. **have had** (Focus: Unfinished time - this week)
13. **did not fight / didn't fight** (Focus: Historical fact)
14. **has broken** (Focus: Recent happening/Result now)
15. **did they leave** (Focus: Specific time point past)