

Present Perfect Tense

A Complete Guide for Intermediate ESL Students



What is the Present Perfect?

The present perfect connects the past and the present. We use it to talk about past actions that are important now, or past experiences that matter in the present moment.



How to Form It

Structure

Positive: Subject + have/has + past participle

Negative: Subject + have/has + not + past participle

Question: Have/Has + subject + past participle?

Examples:

✓ I **have finished** my homework.

✗ She **hasn't called** me yet.

? **Have you seen** the new movie?



When to Use Present Perfect

1. Life Experiences (with "ever" and "never")

To talk about experiences in your life, without saying exactly when:

- I've **never been** to Japan.
- Have you **ever worked** in a restaurant?
- She's **traveled** to over 20 countries.

2. Recent Past with Present Importance (with "just," "already," "yet")

For actions that happened recently and affect the present:

- I've **just finished** the report. (It's ready now!)
- Have you **already submitted** your application?
- They haven't **replied yet**.

3. Unfinished Time Periods (with "today," "this week," "this year")

For actions in time periods that aren't finished:

- I've **attended** three meetings today.
- We've **launched** two new products this year.
- Have you **studied** English this week?

4. Changes Over Time

To show how things have changed:

- My English **has improved** a lot.

- Technology **has changed** our lives.

- Prices **have increased** this year.



Native Speaker Note

How we really use it: Native speakers use present perfect constantly in conversation! We especially use contractions: "I've done it," "She's left," "Haven't you heard?"

Common mistakes to avoid: Don't use present perfect with specific past times. We say "I went to Paris last year" (simple past), NOT "I have gone to Paris last year."

Real conversation example:

"Have you finished the project yet?"

"I've already done most of it, but I haven't checked it yet."



Practice Quiz

Choose the best answer for each situation:

1. Your boss asks about a report that was due today. You finished it 30 minutes ago. What do you say?

- ☐ a) I finished the report.
- ☐ b) I have finished the report.
- ☐ c) I was finishing the report.

2. You want to know about your friend's life experiences. How do you ask if they visited Europe?

- ☐ a) Did you ever visit Europe?
- ☐ b) Have you ever visited Europe?
- ☐ c) Do you visit Europe?

3. Complete this sentence: "I can't find my keys. I _____ everywhere!"

- ☐ a) looked
- ☐ b) have looked
- ☐ c) am looking

4. Your colleague asks if you submitted the application. You did it yesterday. What's the best response?

- ☐ a) Yes, I submitted it yesterday.
- ☐ b) Yes, I have already submitted it.
- ☐ c) Yes, I was submitting it.

5. Which sentence is NOT correct?

- ☐ a) I have studied English for three years.

☐ b) I have been to London last month.

☐ c) Have you finished your homework yet?

Answer Key:

1. **b)** Present perfect shows the report is complete and ready now.
2. **b)** "Ever" with present perfect asks about life experiences.
3. **b)** Present perfect shows you searched and still can't find them.
4. **b)** "Already" emphasizes the task is complete.
5. **b)** Don't use present perfect with specific past times like "last month."