

# Grammar Reference

## Present perfect and past simple

### Life experiences

When talking about a life experience, we can use the **present perfect**. We don't say when it happened because we're more interested in the experience, than the time or date.

*My wife **has seen** both *Sex and the City* movies.*

If we want to say **when** the experience happened in the past, we use the **past simple**.

*She **watched** the newest *Sex and the City* movie **last week**.*

We often use the **present perfect** with the words **ever** and **never**.

***Have you ever fallen** in love? No, sadly I've **never been** in love.*

We can answer these questions with **Yes, I have**. or **No, I haven't**.

If we want to say how many times we have done something, we can use the **present perfect**, or we can add a **past simple** sentence with an expression of time or place.

*'Have you ever fallen in love?' 'Yes. I've actually been in love twice.'*

*'Have you ever fallen in love?' 'Yes, I have. I fell in love twice with different women when I was in Japan.'*

### Recent past actions that are important now

We use the **present perfect** when things that happened in the recent past are important now.

*Oh no! I've **lost** my wedding ring... My wife will kill me!*

We use the **past simple** to say when the action happened.

*I **lost** my wedding ring **last night**...*

### Past situations that are still happening now

We use the **present perfect** for situations that started in the past and are still happening now.

*I **haven't seen** my husband **this morning**. (It is still this morning.)*

We use the **past simple** for situations that started and finished in the past.

*I **didn't see** my husband **this morning**. (It is this afternoon or evening now.)*

### How long... questions

We sometimes use the **present perfect** in these questions.

***How long have you lived** with your boyfriend?*

We talk about **how long** with the words **for** (meaning throughout a period of time) and **since** (meaning from a point of time to now - this can be a date or a past simple phrase).

*We **have lived** together for three years.*

*We've **been** in a relationship since 2002.*

*I've **known** him since we were children.*

If we know it is a completed event, we can ask a **how long** question with the **past simple**.

*'**How long did you live** with your **ex-husband**?' 'We **lived** together for about six years. I moved out when I found out he was cheating!'*

### With just, already and yet

We use the **present perfect** with **just**, **already** and **yet** to talk about recent events in the past. The exact time is not important. We use **just** and **already** mostly in positive sentences. We use **yet** in negative sentences and questions.

*I've **just met** the most gorgeous man! I wonder if he's single...*

*'Let's go to the movies tonight, James.' 'We've **already been** three times this week. I think your movie mad, Jane!'*

*He **hasn't asked me out yet**.*

***Have you decided** when to have your wedding **yet**?*

### Completed actions in the past

We usually talk about these actions and events using the **past simple**. We often include a time reference in these sentences.

*I **met** my wife **on 3 July 1990** and we **got married** **in August**.*

*We **went** on holiday three times together **in 1997**.*

We **celebrated** our 14<sup>th</sup> anniversary **last August**.  
Our close friends **moved** to France **three months ago**.

## Form

### Present perfect

We **have lived** together for six years.

The **present perfect** is made of two parts: the **present form of the verb have** and the **past participle of the main verb**.

Here is how it works in positive, negative and question forms.

#### Positive

##### subject + have + past participle

I **have lived** here for two years. I've **lived** here for two years.  
We **have lived** together for one year. We've **lived** together for one year.  
You **have started** dating that guy. You've **started** dating that guy.  
They **have been** together much longer. They've **been** together much longer.

He **has started** seeing that girl. He's **started** seeing that girl.  
She **has forgiven** him again. She's **forgiven** him again.

#### Negative

##### subject + haven't/hasn't + past participle

I **haven't been** in a relationship for years.  
We **haven't lived** together very long.  
You **haven't moved** in together yet.  
They **haven't been** on holiday together.

He **hasn't dated** anyone else.  
She **hasn't been** married before.  
It **hasn't been** a great time for them.

#### Questions

##### Have/Has + subject + past participle

Have you **asked** her out?  
Have they **started** dating?  
Have we **been** married twenty-five years already?

Has he **really dated** her sister as well?  
Has she **seen** anyone else lately?  
Has it **been** long since you called her?

### Past simple

With the past simple the form doesn't change for each person (I/you/he/she/it/we/they). Remember the regular verbs end **-ed** but irregular verbs don't follow this rule and have their own form.

#### Positive

I **met** my wife in France.  
You **arrived** early.  
He **dated** three women before meeting his wife.  
She **thought** he was the one.  
It **seemed** like a perfect relationship.  
We **wanted** to go to the movies together.  
They **organised** a special holiday for their anniversary.

#### Negative

##### subject + did not / didn't + verb

I **did not / didn't meet** her in Spain.  
You **did not / didn't see** him again.  
He **did not / didn't get** anything for their anniversary.  
She **did not / didn't tell** him about her problem.  
It **did not / didn't end** well.  
We **did not / didn't want** to move in with his parents.  
They **did not / didn't want** a flashy wedding ceremony.

#### Questions

##### Did + subject + verb

Did you **ask** him out then?  
Did he **propose** on holiday?  
Did she **like** her ring?  
Did we **book** that band for the wedding reception?  
Did they **really run** away together?

**Take note: time expressions**

We use the past simple, but not the present perfect, with past time expressions like **yesterday**, **last month**, **six years ago**, **when I was a child**.

**CORRECT:** *What **did** you do when you finished college?*

**WRONG:** *What **have** you done when you finished college?*

**CORRECT:** *I **left** that company **three years ago**.*

**WRONG:** *I **have left** that company **three years ago**.*

**Take note: writing and speech**

We often use the past simple (not the present perfect) to describe events in stories, when one thing happens after another in the past. We use the present perfect more in speech than in writing.

**Spoken English**

In everyday speech and writing, it's common to use a contraction with the auxiliary verb in the present perfect and the past simple.

***I've** just been to the supermarket.*

***We haven't** ever tried eating snails.*

*He **didn't** answer his phone when I called.*