

# Present Perfect

## Definition of Present Perfect

Present perfect is the form of a present tense that expresses an action having started in the past and completed recently, or an action that continues in the present. It is also known as “present perfective tense.” Present perfect is a combination of the past [participle](#) (ending in -n, -d, or -ed) of the main verb, and some form of an auxiliary, such as “has” in the case of a singular [subject](#), or “have” in the case of a plural subject.

For example, in the excerpt, “The highway in front of him is empty. He has forgotten the numbers of the routes he has taken and the names of the towns he has passed through” (*Rabbit, Run*, by John Updike), all the forms of auxiliary in these sentences are in present form.

## Everyday Use of Present Perfect

The company has launched new styles.

We have gotten back to work.

Have they ever visited that museum?

She has gone to school.

He has lived in this town all his life.

## Examples of Present Perfect in Literature

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Example #1: *A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall* (by Bob Dylan)

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“I’ve stumbled on the side of twelve misty mountains.

I’ve walked and I’ve crawled on six crooked highways.

I’ve stepped in the middle of seven sad forests.”

All the underlined words are examples of present perfect tense. All auxiliary verbs used in this example are in present forms, while the main verbs “stumble,” “walk,” “crawl,” and “step” are in [past participle](#) forms.

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**Example #2: *This Dreadful Masterpiece* (by Ernie Pyle)**

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“Someday when peace has returned to this odd world I want to come to London again and stand on a certain balcony on a moonlit night and look down upon the peaceful silver curve of the Thames with its dark bridges.”

Here the present perfect tense “has returned” is informing the audience about peace that started in the past and continues to be in the present.

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**Example #3: *Pride and Prejudice* (by Jane Austen)**

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“My dear Mr. Bennet,” said his lady to him one day, “have you heard that Netherfield Park is let at last?” Mr. Bennet replied that he had not. “But it is,” returned she; “for Mrs. Long has just been here, and she told me all about it.” Mr. Bennet made no answer. “Do you not want to know who has taken it?” cried his wife impatiently...They are my old friends. I have heard you mention them with consideration these last twenty years at least.”

In this passage, the narrative action has taken place in past. However, the conversation between the characters is in present perfect tense, as shown by the underlined words.

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**Example #4: *For a Glory and a Covering* (by Douglas Wilson)**

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“The language of the passage describes wisdom as a great lady who has prepared a great banquet. She has built her house, she has overseen the slaughter of the cattle, she has mixed the wine, and she has set the table.”

This passage shows the underlined words having present forms of the auxiliaries and past participles of the respective verbs.

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#### **Example #5: *Corduroy* (by Don Freeman)**

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“Oh, Mommy!’ she said. ‘Look! There’s the very bear I’ve always wanted.’ Not today, dear.’ Her mother sighed. ‘I’ve spent too much already. Besides, he doesn’t look new. He’s lost the button to one of his shoulder straps.”

All the past participles “wanted,” “spent,” and lost” have appeared with auxiliary verbs in present forms.

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#### **Example #6: *Cherry Orchard* (by Anton Chekhov)**

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“Our Yaroslav aunt has promised to send something, but I don’t know when or how much. What sins have you committed? Oh, my sins ... I’ve always scattered money about without holding myself in, like a madwoman, and I married a man who made nothing but debts.... What have you done to me, Peter? I don’t love the cherry orchard as I used to.”

The author has used present perfect tense in this entire passage. A few actions have started in the past and continue to happen in the present as shown by underlined verbs. However, in the second example, there is always, an adverb, before the verb, while the third example is in interrogative format.

### **Function of Present Perfect**

Present perfect tense implies a connection of the past with the present. Therefore, it is mostly used in literature, newspapers, TV, radio reports, letters, and conversations. It helps habitual and ongoing situations to be shown happening in the present time. It does not specify a particular time in the past for an event or action. It simply shows that a task has been executed at an unspecified time which is very good for short stories and

