

Present Perfect

Positive	Negative	Question
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have travelled. • You have travelled. • He has travelled. • She has travelled. • It has travelled. • We have travelled. • You have travelled. • They have travelled. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have not travelled. • You have not travelled. • He has not travelled. • She has not travelled. • It has not travelled. • We have not travelled. • You have not travelled. • They have not travelled. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have I travelled? • Have you travelled? • Has he travelled? • Has she travelled? • Has it travelled? • Have we travelled? • Have you travelled? • Have they travelled?

Note: when speaking we use the contractions:

I have = I've // you have = you've // he has = he's // she has = she's

it has = it's // we have = we've // you have = you've

they have = they've

have not = haven't // has not = hasn't

We also use contractions for informal writing like emails to friends and colleagues. When you write a formal text, like a job application letter, you **MUST** use full forms.

When speaking we also say things like:

Our cat's had kittens. // John's moved to France.

The house's been sold. // The world's gone to hell.

But you should not write these as contractions.

USE 1 Unspecified Time Before Now



We use the Present Perfect to say that an action happened at an unspecified time before now. **The exact time is not important.** You CANNOT use the Present Perfect with specific time expressions such as: yesterday, one year ago, last week, when I was a child, when I lived in Japan, at that moment, that day, one day, etc. We CAN use the Present Perfect with unspecific expressions such as: ever, never, once, many times, several times, before, so far, already, yet, etc.

- I have seen that movie twenty times.
- I think I have met him once before.
- There have been many earthquakes in California.
- People have travelled to the Moon.
- People have not travelled to Mars.
- Have you read the book yet?
- Nobody has ever climbed that mountain.
- A: Has there ever been a war in the United States?
B: Yes, there has.

How Do You Actually Use the Present Perfect?

The concept of 'unspecified time' can be very confusing. It is best to associate Present Perfect with the following topics:

TOPIC 1 Things you have done and things you haven't done

We use the Present Perfect to talk about things that we have done and things that we haven't done. 'When' is not important and not specified.

- I have been to France.
At some point in your life you were in France at least once. Maybe you have been there once, or several times, we don't know.
- I have been to France three times.
You can add the number of times at the end of the sentence.
- I have never been to France.
- I think I have seen that movie before.
- He has never travelled by train.
- Joan has studied two foreign languages.
- A: Have you ever met him?
B: No, I haven't.

TOPIC 2 Change Over Time

We often use the Present Perfect to talk about change that has happened over a period of time.

- You have grown since the last time I saw you.
- The government has become more interested in arts education.
- Japanese has become one of the most popular courses at the university since the Asian studies program was established.
- My English has really improved since I moved to Australia.

TOPIC 3 Accomplishments

We use the Present Perfect to list the accomplishments of individuals and humanity. You cannot mention a specific time.

- Man has walked on the Moon.
- Our son has learned how to read.
- Doctors have cured many deadly diseases.
- Scientists have split the atom.

TOPIC 4 An Uncompleted Action You Are Expecting

We use the Present Perfect to say that an action which we expected has not happened. Using the Present Perfect suggests that we are still waiting for the action to happen.

- James has not finished his homework yet.
- Susan hasn't mastered Japanese, but she can communicate.
- Bill has still not arrived.
- The rain hasn't stopped.

TOPIC 5 Multiple Actions at Different Times

We use the Present Perfect to talk about several different actions which have occurred in the past at different times. Present Perfect suggests the process is not complete and more actions are possible.

- The army has attacked that city five times.
- I have had four quizzes and five tests so far this semester.
- We have had many major problems while working on this project.
- She has talked to several specialists about her problem, but nobody knows why she is sick.

Time Expressions with Present Perfect

When we use the Present Perfect it means that something has happened at some point in our lives before now. Remember, the exact time the action happened is not important.



Sometimes, we want to limit the time we are looking in for an experience. We can do this with expressions such as: in the last week, in the last year, this week, this month, so far, up to now, etc.



- Have you been to Mexico in the last year?
- I have seen that movie six times in the last month.
- They have had three tests in the last week.
- She graduated from university less than three years ago. She has worked for three different companies so far.
- My car has broken down three times this week.

Note: 'Last year' and 'in the last year' are very different. 'Last year' means the year before now, and it is considered a specific time in the past, so it takes the Past Simple. 'In the last year' means at some point in the last 365 days, so it is not considered a specific time and takes the Present Perfect.

- I went to Mexico last year.
I went to Mexico in the calendar year before this one.
- I have been to Mexico in the last year.
I have been to Mexico at least once at some point in the last 365 days.

USE 2 Duration From the Past Until Now (Non-Continuous Verbs)



We use the Present Perfect with [Non-Continuous Verbs](#) (also known as 'stative' verbs or 'state' verbs) and non-continuous uses of [Mixed Verbs](#) to show that something started in the past and has continued up until now. "For five minutes," "for two weeks," and "since Tuesday" are all durations which can be used with the Present Perfect.

- I have had a cold for two weeks.
- She has been in England for six months.
- Mary has loved chocolate since she was a little girl.

Although the above use of Present Perfect is normally limited to Non-Continuous Verbs and non-continuous uses of Mixed Verbs, the words "live," "work," "teach," and "study" are often used in this way even though they are NOT Non-Continuous Verbs.

USE 3 To Present New Information

B In news reports, you will often read about or hear recent events introduced with the present perfect, and then the past simple or other past tenses are used to give details:

□ 'The film star Jim Cooper has died of cancer. He was 68 and lived in Texas...'

□ 'A teacher from Oslo has become the first woman to cross the Antarctic alone. It took her 42 days to make the crossing with her dog team...'

□ 'The US space shuttle Atlantis has returned safely to earth. It landed in Florida this morning...'

Here's another example:

- A) Ouch!
B) What have you done?
A) I've hit my thumb with the hammer.
B) What did you do that for?
A) I didn't mean to do it! It was an accident!

NOTE These days, especially on international news channels like BBC World and Al Jazeera the Past Simple is typically used instead.

ADVERB PLACEMENT

The examples below show the placement for grammar adverbs such as: always, only, never, ever, still, just, etc.

- You have only seen that movie one time.
- Have you only seen that movie one time?

ACTIVE / PASSIVE

- Many tourists have visited that castle. *Active*
- That castle has been visited by many tourists. *Passive*

Go to <http://www.englishpage.com/verbpage/presentperfect.html> and <http://www.perfect-english-grammar.com/present-perfect-use.html> to find exercises to practise the Present Perfect.