

Mastering Past Simple and Present Perfect: A Comprehensive Grammar Guide with Listening & Reading Practice (CEFR Level: A2)



Introduction to Past Simple vs. Present Perfect

The difference between the past simple and the present perfect is a fundamental aspect of English grammar. Both tenses refer to actions that took place in the past, but they express those actions differently based on time and their connection to the present.

Past Simple vs. Present Perfect: Key Differences

Feature	Past Simple	Present Perfect
Use	Refers to completed actions in a specific point of time in the past.	Refers to actions that happened at an unspecified time and are still relevant to the present.
Time Reference	Time expressions are usually specific (e.g., yesterday, last year).	Time expressions are often vague or unspecified (e.g., ever, never, since, for).
Example	I visited Paris last summer.	I have visited Paris three times.
Form	Subject + verb (past form)	Subject + have/has + past participle (e.g., "have gone")
Typical Time Expressions	yesterday, last year, in 2000, two days ago, when, a week ago.	already, yet, just, ever, never, since, for, lately, recently, so far.

When to Use the Past Simple:

1. **Completed actions at a specific time in the past.**
 - Example: "I **watched** a movie last night."
 - Example: "She **went** to London two years ago."
2. **Actions in a sequence of events in the past.**
 - Example: "He **woke up**, **got** dressed, and **left** the house."
3. **States or facts in the past.**
 - Example: "I **lived** in Brazil when I was a child."

When to Use the Present Perfect:

1. **Actions that happened at an unspecified time in the past and have a connection to the present.**
 - Example: "I **have visited** Paris many times."
2. **Actions that started in the past and continue to the present (especially with "for" or "since").**
 - Example: "She **has lived** here for five years."
3. **Recent actions with relevance to the present.**
 - Example: "He **has just finished** his homework."

Time Expression	Used with Past Simple	Used with Present Perfect
Yesterday	I saw the movie yesterday .	Not used.
Last + [time period]	She traveled to Rome last year .	Not used.
For	Not typically used.	I have known him for 10 years .
Since	Not typically used.	I have lived here since 2010 .
Ever	Not used.	Have you ever been to Japan?
Never	Not used.	I have never been to Japan.
Already	Not used.	I have already eaten.
Just	Not used.	She has just finished her work.
So far	Not used.	I have read five books so far.

Examples of Common Time Expressions in Sentences:

- **Past Simple:**
 - "We went to the beach **last weekend**."
 - "I visited the museum **two days ago**."
- **Present Perfect:**
 - "I have seen that movie **before**."
 - "They have worked at the company **since 2010**."

When to Use the Present Perfect:

1. **Actions that happened at an unspecified time in the past and have a connection to the present.**
 - Example: "I **have visited** Paris many times."
2. **Actions that started in the past and continue to the present (especially with "for" or "since").**
 - Example: "She **has lived** here for five years."
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Exhile Verbs (Irregular Verbs)

Both past simple and present perfect tenses often involve **irregular verbs**. These verbs do not follow the regular "-ed" rule, so their past tense forms **must be memorized**. Here are some examples:

Base Form	Past Simple	Past Participle (Present Perfect)
go	went	gone
see	saw	seen
eat	ate	eaten
buy	bought	bought
write	wrote	written
take	took	taken

Grammar Exercises

Exercise 1: Choose the Correct Verb Form

Complete the sentences with the correct form of the verb (past simple or present perfect).

- I _____ (see) that movie last night.
- She _____ (never/travel) to Asia before.
- When we _____ (arrive) at the party, it had already started.
- They _____ (buy) a new house last month.
- My cousin _____ (write) three books so far.

Exercise 2: Fill in the Gaps with the Correct Tense

Choose the correct verb form for each sentence.

- Since he _____ (start) his new job, he _____ (become) more responsible.
- After the concert _____ (end), we _____ (go) to a café.
- I _____ (not see) Emma since we _____ (graduate).
- By the time she _____ (arrive), everyone _____ (leave).
- The moment I _____ (hear) the news, I _____ (call) my best friend.

Exercise 3: Multiple Choice Questions

Choose the correct option:

- When I was a child, I ___ to the zoo every summer.
 - have gone
 - went
 - go
 - have been
- Mark ___ his keys three times this month.
 - lost
 - has lost
 - loses
 - was losing
- We ___ this film before, but we're watching it again.
 - saw
 - have seen
 - see
 - were seeing

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A Journey Through Time: Past Simple & Present Perfect in Action

Read & Listen to an audio report about “A Journey Through Time”. Then answer the following multiple-choice questions.

Daniel has always loved traveling. Since he was a child, he has dreamed of exploring the world. Over the past ten years, he has visited over twenty countries and has experienced different cultures. However, his passion for adventure started long before that.

Daniel grew up in a small town in England. When he was ten years old, his parents took him on a family trip to Spain. It was his first time abroad, and he fell in love with traveling. He tried new foods, met new people, and saw incredible places. From that moment on, he knew he wanted to explore more.



In 2015, Daniel graduated from university and decided to take a gap year. He traveled to South America, where he spent six months in Peru. During that time, he hiked the Inca Trail, saw Machu Picchu at sunrise, and learned Spanish. He still remembers the feeling of standing at the top of the mountain, looking at the ancient ruins.

Since then, he has never stopped traveling. He has climbed Mount Kilimanjaro, has swum with dolphins in Australia, and has explored the bustling streets of Tokyo. He has also worked as a volunteer in different countries, teaching English and helping communities in need.

But not all of his experiences have been perfect. A few years ago, while he was traveling in Thailand, he lost his passport. It was a stressful situation, but he managed to solve it. Since that day, he has always been extra careful with his documents.

Recently, Daniel has started a travel blog to share his adventures. He has written about his experiences, posted photos, and given travel tips. Many people have followed his journey, and some have even decided to travel because of his stories.

Looking back, Daniel feels grateful for every moment. He has met incredible people, has learned valuable lessons, and has seen breathtaking places. Although he has traveled to many countries, there are still so many places left to explore. Next year, he plans to visit Iceland and hopes to see the Northern Lights.

As Daniel sits in a café in Paris, enjoying a warm croissant, he smiles. He has come a long way since that first trip to Spain. And he knows his journey is far from over.

Comprehension Questions:



1 What event in Daniel's childhood made him love traveling?

2 How many countries has Daniel visited?

3 What did he do in Peru during his gap year?

4 What problem did Daniel face in Thailand?

5 What has Daniel started recently?

6 What are his future travel plans?

Answer Key



Exercise 1:

- 1 saw
- 2 has never traveled
- 3 arrived
- 4 bought
- 5 has written

Exercise 2:

- 1 started / has become
- 2 ended / went
- 3 haven't seen / graduated
- 4 arrived / had left
- 5 heard / called

Exercise 3:

- 1 b) went
- 2 b) has lost
- 3 b) have seen

A journey through time answer key

- 1 His first trip to Spain when he was ten years old.
- 2 Over twenty countries.
- 3 He hiked the Inca Trail, saw Machu Picchu, and learned Spanish.
- 4 He lost his passport.
- 5 A travel blog.