

Present Perfect vs Past Simple

The present perfect is used to indicate a link between the present and the past. The time of the action is **before now but not specified**, and we are often more interested in the **result** than in the action

The Present Perfect is used to describe

- **An action or situation that started in the past and continues in the present.** I **have lived** in Bristol **since** 1984 (= and I still do.)

For Ex:

They *haven't lived* here for years.

She *has worked* in the bank for five years.

We *have had* the same car for ten years.

Have you played the piano since you were a child?

- **An action performed during a period that has not yet finished.** She **has been** to the cinema twice this week (= and the week isn't over yet.)

For Ex:

I have worked hard *this week*.

It *has rained* a lot *this year*.

We *haven't seen* her *today*.

- **A repeated action in an unspecified period between the past and now.** We **have visited** Portugal several times.

For Ex:

They *have seen* that film six times

It *has happened* several times already.

She *has visited* them frequently.

We *have eaten* at that restaurant many times.

- **An action when the time is not important.** He **has read** 'War and Peace'. (= the result of his reading is important)

Someone *has eaten* my soup!

Have you seen 'Gone with the Wind'?

She's studied Japanese, Russian, and English.

Simple Past

The Simple past describes a completed action in a time before now and things that happen one after another in the past.

For Example:

First Bob read a book, then he went to bed yesterday night.

Last week I came to a church and then I took the road right.

To describe actions that happened at a specific time in the past.

Examples:

I got a present yesterday.

I had in great time in America last year.

Present perfect vs past simple

With the present perfect we do not specify when the action happened. If we give the time or it is clear from the context that we mention a certain time in the past, we must use the past simple.

Have you had breakfast? But: Did you have breakfast at the hotel?

I've read your letter. But: I read your letter last night.

They have told me. But: They told me when we met.

Have you had the operation? But: When did you have the operation?

Important Note: In the present perfect we express that something happened in the past which is important now. The time is **not relevant**.

In the past tense the time of the action is **relevant**.

Exercise 01: Choose the right answer

1-I bought a new computer last week, but it _____so I took it back to the shop.

hasn't worked

didn't work

don't work

worked not

2-I tried to find you before school today. _____?

Where have you been?

Where did you be?

Where were you?

Where was you?

3-Have you seen my pencil? It was here a minute ago and now _____.

it's gone

it went

it have gone

it was going

4-I _____to the cinema since I came to Germany.

went not

didn't go

haven't gone

hasn't gone

Exercise 02:

Put the verbs into the correct tense (simple past or present perfect simple).

1. Mother: I want to prepare dinner. (you / wash)_____ the dishes yet?

2. Daughter: I (wash)_____ the dishes yesterday, but I (have / not)_____ the time yet to do it today

3. Mother: (you / do / already)_____ your homework?

4. No, I (come / just)_____ home from school.

5. Mother: You (come)_____ home from school two hours ago!

6. Daughter: Well, but my friend Lucy (call)_____ when I (arrive)_____ and I (finish / just)_____ the phone call.

7. Mother: (you / see / not)_____ Lucy at school in the morning?

8- Daughter: Yes, but we (have / not)_____ time to talk then.

Present perfect continuous

The present perfect continuous is used to refer to an **unspecified time** between 'before now' and 'now'. The speaker is thinking about something that started but perhaps did not finish in that period of time. He/she is interested in the **process as well as the result**, and this process may still be going on, or may have just finished.

1-The present perfect continuous is used when an action needs to be emphasized that started in the past and is still ongoing in the present:

For Example:

“She **has been telling** stories all day.”

“I’ve **been waiting** for the bus for 30 minutes now.”

2-It also describes a process that has taken place or is still taking place and that has an effect on the present:

For Example

“Tom is completely soaked. He **has been standing** in the rain for hours.”

“I’m very tired. I’ve **been working** all day.”

3-If you want to show the duration of habits that have been taking place, the present perfect progressive can also be utilized:

For Example

“He **has been taking** part in competitions for over 12 years now.”

The person started 12 years ago and is still doing it.

“We’ve **been going** to that restaurant since 1998.”

They started to visit the restaurant in 1998 and still go there regularly.

Note: The present perfect continuous needs two auxiliary verbs, which means it is formed by using the conjugated form of the auxiliary ‘to have’, the past participle of ‘to be’ (→ been), and the present participle (which is the ing-form) of the corresponding verb. Compare:

Present perfect simple vs present perfect continuous

1. In some situations we can use both tenses and there is practically no difference in meaning. The continuous is more usual in the English language.

For Example:

It has rained for a long time.

It has been raining for a long time.

Verbs which can be used in this way include - *learn, live, sleep, rain, sit, work, wait, stay...*

2. Sometimes the simple form can describe a permanent state, while the continuous form a temporary activity.

For Example:

I have lived here for ten years. It is my permanent address.

I have been living here for ten years. And now I am going to move.

Some verbs cannot express this difference, because they are not normally used in the continuous tenses. (State verbs)

Exercise 01: Put the verbs in the present perfect continuous

1-She_____ (go) to the cinema every weekend for years.

2-It_____ (rain) the pavement is wet.

3-You_____ (sleep) for twelve hours.

4-I_____ (not/work) today.

5-You_____ (not/eat) well recently.

Exercise 02:

Choose the appropriate verb with Present Perfect Continuous.

(not/exercise); (not/live); (not/drink); (not/play); (not/study)

1-We_____ enough.

2-She_____.

3-They _____ here for very long.

4-He_____ football for five years.

5-We_____ enough water- that's why we feel tired.

Past Continuous

Basically, the **past continuous** (or sometimes called **past progressive**) is used to express a process (or an action) that took place before now, which also means that it is over. The main point of this type of tense is to emphasize the process itself. The continuous form does not say anything about the length of the process although very short actions would rather be expressed in the past simple. The following cases are typical for the past continuous:

- **It is frequently used for actions that were ongoing at a specific point in time in the past:**
 - “Yesterday at 7 o'clock in the morning I **was reading** the newspaper.”
- **It is also common when one action in the past was happening when another one started or a sudden one took place. The ongoing process may – or may not – have ended:**
 - “Sue **was walking** home when the accident happened.”
 - Sue did not stop and hence the action of walking did not terminate.
 - “They **were driving** on the highway when their car broke down.”
 - They could not go any further. The action ended.
- **Another way of using the past continuous is by describing two processes that were happening at the same time in the past (often in combination with key words like ‘while’ or ‘when’):**
 - “She **was watching** TV while her husband **was preparing** dinner.”
- **The past progressive describes actions that took place over a delimited period in the past:**

- “I **was living** alone when they broke into my house.”
 - Now the person does not live alone anymore. That period of time is over.
- “Patrick **was studying** in London at the time of the earthquake.”
 - Patrick’s studies are over. The process ended.
- **In conjunction with the adverb ‘always’ the past continuous can describe habits or regular actions in the past that the speaker perceived as annoying:**
 - “The salesman **was always calling** me.”

Exercise01:

Complete the sentences with the past simple or progressive.

- 1- We _____(eat) dinner at 8pm last night (we started eating at 7:30).
- 2- Yesterday, I _____(go) to the Post Office, _____(buy) some fruit at the supermarket and _____(read) a book in the park in the afternoon.
- 3-We _____(watch) TV when we _____(hear) a loud noise.
- 4-Julie _____(be) in the garden when Laurence _____(arrive).
- 5-A: What _____(do) at 3 pm yesterday?
B: I _____(clean) my house.

Exercise 02: Complete the dialogue.

- A : As I _____ to work last Friday, all of a sudden a car stopped in front of me.
- B: What _____, when you _____ it ?
- A: I _____ on the brakes. Unfortunately, I _____ into the car.

Exercise 3: Correct mistakes.

Yesterday Carrol was writing letters from 10 to 11 and then from 5 to 7 again.
Yesterday Carrol _____ letters from 10 to 11 and then from 5 to 7 again.

We arrived in Cannes at 2.30 and the sun shone.
We arrived in Cannes at 2.30 and the sun _____

People sunbathed on the beach and a big yacht was sailing near the harbour.
People _____ on the beach and a big yacht was sailing near the harbour.

We parked our car and were going to the beach.
We parked our car and _____ to the beach

Past Perfect

The **past perfect**, also called the pluperfect, is a verb tense used to talk about actions that were completed before some point in the past

- The past perfect simple is required for an action or process that happened before another one (key words: ‘the previous week, the day before, the month before’ etc.):
 - “The week before I bought the car I **had won** the lottery.”
 - first or rather earlier action that took place = ‘... had won the lottery ...’
 - second or subsequent action = ‘... bought the car ...’
 - “I couldn’t get into my house because I **had lost** the key the previous day.”
 - first action = ‘... had lost the key ...’
 - second action = ‘... couldn’t get into my house ...’
- The past perfect simple can also describe actions in the past in a similar way as the present perfect does for actions in the present:
 - “They **are laughing** because their neighbor has told them a funny joke.”
 - present tenses
 - “They **were laughing** because their neighbor had told them a funny joke.”
 - past tenses
- **Attention:** For events and processes that happened instantaneously in a consecutive way the past simple is usually the correct tense to choose:
 - “Sally **paid, went** to her car and **drove** home.”
 - “I **went** to bed and **fell** asleep straightaway.”

Past Perfect Continuous

In principle, the **past perfect continuous** describes actions that happened before certain events in the past. This tense strongly emphasizes the process of the action and not just the fact that it occurred (as the past perfect simple does). It is necessary in the following cases:

- **An action started before and continued up to a fixed time in the past:**
 - “We had been waiting for takeoff for 2 hours when the flight was cancelled.”
 - “Oliver had already been working there for 7 years when I started at that company.”
- **The past perfect continuous can also be used for actions in the past just as the present perfect continuous is used for actions in the present:**
 - “Sue is very angry because she **has been waiting** for two hours.”
 - Both parts of the sentence are present tenses.
 - “Sue was very angry because she **had been waiting** for two hours before he arrived.”
 - In this sentence both clauses refer to the past tense.
- **Information:** The past perfect simple as well as the past perfect continuous are frequently utilized in conditional III sentences (if-clauses type 3), and also when describing something in reported speech .

Exercise 01:

Complete the sentences with Past Perfect Tense

Example:

Carol wanted to fly to Dublin. She _____by plane before. (never travel)

It was 11 o'clock. Carol Parker_____ at the Shaw Hotel five minutes before. (arrive)

She'd lost her way because she_____ to Dublin. (never be)

Carol had a detailed map in her handbag but she_____ her glasses at home and could not read it. (leave)

She_____ the reception and_____ about the way. (call, ask)
Right: had called; had asked

Exercise 3:

Rewrite sentences.

Example:

His driving too fast caused an accident.

He had an accident because he had been driving too fast.

He was relaxing all day. He felt better in the evening.

He felt better in the evening because he_____ all day.

The ship sailed for two days. It landed in Nice.

The ship landed in Nice after it_____ for two days.

After swimming all day they were hungry.

They were hungry because they_____ all day.

Sarah thought about going to America. She decided to study there.

Sarah decided to study in America after she_____ about going there for a while.

They walked all the way. They were tired.

They were tired because they_____ all the way.