

# Present Perfect Tense

## *I have sung*

The present perfect tense is a rather important tense in English, but it gives speakers of some languages a difficult time. That is because it uses concepts or ideas that do not exist in those languages. In fact, the **structure** of the present perfect tense is very simple. The problems come with the **use** of the tense. In addition, there are some differences in usage between British and American English.

In this lesson we look at the structure and use of the present perfect, followed by a quiz to check your understanding:

## How do we make the Present Perfect Tense?

The structure of the present perfect tense is:

subject + auxiliary verb + main verb

have      past participle

Here are some examples of the present perfect tense:

	subject	auxiliary verb		main verb	
+	I	have		seen	ET.
+	You	have		eaten	mine.
-	She	has	not	been	to Rome.
-	We	have	not	played	football.
?	Have	you		finished?	
?	Have	they		done	it?

## Contractions with the present perfect tense

When we use the present perfect tense in speaking, we usually contract the subject and auxiliary verb. We also sometimes do this when we write.

I have	I've
You have	You've
He has	He's
She has	She's
It has	It's
John has	John's
The car has	The car's
We have	We've
They have	They've

**He's or he's???** Be careful! The 's contraction is used for the auxiliary verbs *have* and *be*. For example, "It's eaten" can mean:

- It **has** eaten. [present perfect tense, active voice]
- It **is** eaten. [present tense, passive voice]

It is usually clear from the context.

Here are some examples:

- I've finished my work.
- John's seen ET.
- They've gone home.

## How do we use the Present Perfect Tense?

This tense is called the **present** perfect tense. There is always a connection with the past and with the **present**. There are basically three uses for the present perfect tense:

1. experience
2. change
3. continuing situation

### 1. Present perfect tense for experience

We often use the present perfect tense to talk about **experience** from the past. We are not interested in **when** you did something. We only want to know **if** you did it:

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I have seen ET. He has lived in Bangkok. Have you been there? We have never eaten caviar.		
<b>past</b>	<b>present</b>	<b>future</b>
-	!!!	
The action or state was in the past.	In my head, I have a memory now.	

**Connection with past:** the event was in the past.

**Connection with present:** in my head, **now**, I have a memory of the event; I **know** something about the event; I have **experience** of it.

## 2. Present perfect tense for change

We also use the present perfect tense to talk about a **change** or **new** information:

I have bought a car.		
<b>past</b>	<b>present</b>	<b>future</b>
-	+	
Last week I didn't have a car.	Now I have a car.	

John has broken his leg.		
<b>past</b>	<b>present</b>	<b>future</b>
+	-	

Yesterday John had a good leg.	Now he has a bad leg.	
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Has the price gone up?		
<b>past</b>	<b>present</b>	<b>future</b>
+	-	
Was the price \$1.50 yesterday?	Is the price \$1.70 today?	

The police have arrested the killer.		
<b>past</b>	<b>present</b>	<b>future</b>
-	+	
Yesterday the killer was free.	Now he is in prison.	

**Connection with past:** the past is the opposite of the present.

**Connection with present:** the present is the opposite of the past.

Americans do not use the present perfect tense so much as British speakers. Americans often use the past tense instead. An American might say "Did you have lunch?", where a British person would say "Have you had lunch?"

### 3. Present perfect tense for continuing situation

We often use the present perfect tense to talk about a **continuing situation**. This is a state that started in the **past** and continues in the **present** (and will probably continue into the future). This is a **state** (not an action). We usually use **for** or **since** with this structure.

I have worked here since June. He has been ill for 2 days. How long have you known Tara?		
<b>past</b>	<b>present</b>	<b>future</b>
The situation started in the past.	It continues up to now.	(It will probably continue into the future.)

**Connection with past:** the situation started in the past.

**Connection with present:** the situation continues in the present.

## For & Since with Present Perfect Tense

We often use **for** and **since** with the present perfect tense.

- We use **for** to talk about a **period** of time - 5 minutes, 2 weeks, 6 years.
- We use **since** to talk about a **point** in past time - 9 o'clock, 1st January, Monday.

for	since
<b>a period of time</b>	<b>a point in past time</b>
—————	x-----
20 minutes	6.15pm
three days	Monday
6 months	January
4 years	1994
2 centuries	1800
a long time	I left school
ever	the beginning of time



etc	etc
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Here are some examples:

- I have been here **for** 20 minutes.
- I have been here **since** 9 o'clock.
- John hasn't called **for** 6 months.
- John hasn't called **since** February.
- He has worked in New York **for** a long time.
- He has worked in New York **since** he left school.

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**For** can be used with all tenses. **Since** is usually used with perfect tenses only.

Present Perfect Exercise:

- 1 Lindsay \_\_\_\_\_ not been to France.
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_ you finished your homework?
- 3 They \_\_\_\_\_ gone to a rock concert.
- 4 \_\_\_\_\_ you been to Japan?
- 5 We \_\_\_\_\_ never eaten Mexican food.
- 6 Andrea has \_\_\_\_\_ her umbrella.
- 7 \_\_\_\_\_ the sun come up?
- 8 The children \_\_\_\_\_ the lost puppy.
- 9 How long have you \_\_\_\_\_ a vegetarian?
- 10 I haven't worked \_\_\_\_\_ last December.