

The Complete Guide to the PRESENT PERFECT

The present perfect verb tense is a little difficult in English – it is used in several different ways, and there are lots of rules to remember. This lesson will teach you everything you ever wanted to know about the present perfect – try the four quizzes with grammar exercises in each section!

How to form the Present Perfect

Present Perfect Positive

SUBJECT	HAVE / HAS	PAST PARTICIPLE
I / you / we / they	have	written
he / she / it	has	written

Note: In spoken English, it's common to use the contraction:

- I've written three books.
- We've already seen that movie
- Barbara's forgotten her cell phone.
- He's just woken up.

In this case, **he's, she's, Barbara's, etc.** mean **he has, she has, and Barbara has**, not **he is, she is, or Barbara is**.

Present Perfect Negative

SUBJECT	HAVEN'T / HASN'T	PAST PARTICIPLE
I / you / we / they	haven't	seen
he / she / it	hasn't	seen

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Examples:

- I haven't seen John this week.
- Mary hasn't come to class for the past two days.

Present Perfect Questions

HAVE / HAS	SUBJECT	PAST PARTICIPLE
Have	I / you / we / they	finished?
Has	he / she / it	finished?

Examples:

- Have you finished the project yet?
- Has George ever been to New York?

How to answer present perfect questions:

- Have you been to London?
Yes, I have. / No, I haven't.
- Has Alex met Miriam yet?
Yes, he has. / No, he hasn't.
- Have the results of the election been announced?
Yes, they have. / No, they haven't.

What is the past participle?

The past participle is a form of the verb that describes a completed action or state.

For regular verbs, the past participle is the same as the simple past:

- **I worked** (simple past) all day yesterday.
- **I've worked** (past participle) here since August.

This is also the case for many irregular verbs:

- **He sold** (simple past) his car last week.
- **He's sold** (past participle) 200 books so far.

However, some irregular verbs' past participles are different from their simple past form:

- **We wrote** (simple past) an article for the newspaper.
- **We've written** (past participle) for many famous publications.

Many of these irregular past participles end in -n:

Infinitive	Simple Past	Past Participle
be	was / were	been
break	broke	broken
choose	chose	chosen
do	did	done
drive	drove	driven
eat	ate	eaten
fall	fell	fallen
fly	flew	flown
forget	forgot	forgotten
give	gave	given
go	went	gone
know	knew	known
see	saw	seen
show	showed	shown
speak	spoke	spoken
steal	stole	stolen
take	took	taken
wear	wore	worn
write	wrote	written

Other irregular past participles have a change in the vowel:

Infinitive	Simple Past	Past Participle
become	became	become
begin	began	begun
come	came	come
drink	drank	drunk
ring	rang	rung
run	ran	run
sing	sang	sung
swim	swam	swum

Present Perfect Quiz: Is each sentence grammatically correct or incorrect?

Question 1 - They already given me the money.

- a. Correct
- b. Incorrect

Question 2 - She's been to Berlin twice.

- a. Correct
- b. Incorrect

Question 3 - Gary is known Darla for a long time.

- a. Correct
- b. Incorrect

Question 4 - I haven't read today's newspaper yet.

- a. Correct
- b. Incorrect

Question 5 - Has he ever eaten Brazilian food?

- a. Correct
- b. Incorrect

Question 6 - Help, police! That man's just stolen my wallet!

- a. Correct
- b. Incorrect

Question 7 - We've recently wrote a book.

- a. Correct
- b. Incorrect

Question 8 - Laura have sold her car.

- a. Correct
- b. Incorrect

Question 9 - I haven't take the test yet.

- a. Correct
- b. Incorrect

Question 10 - Has you ever met my brother?

- a. Correct
- b. Incorrect

Question 11 - I've lived in Orlando for three years.

- a. Correct
- b. Incorrect

Question 12 - No, they hasn't eaten lunch yet.

- a. Correct
- b. Incorrect

Question 13 - We haven't chosen a name for the baby yet.

- a. Correct
- b. Incorrect

Question 14 - Have you ever driven a Ferrari?

- a. Correct
- b. Incorrect

Question 15 - Have you heard the new song by Adele?

- a. Correct
- b. Incorrect

Present Perfect with unfinished time

Present Perfect with **ever** / **never**

The present perfect is used with **ever** and **never** to talk about actions done at any time in a person's life, or at any time in history until now.

- Have you ever been to Japan?
- Has she ever seen Titanic?
- Have they ever ridden a motorcycle?
- Has Jason ever failed a test?

Use **ever** in questions only – NOT in statements.

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- ~~“I’ve ever been to Japan.”~~
- “I’ve been to Japan.”

Use **never** in statements – but only with have/has, not with haven’t/hasn’t:

- ~~“My sister hasn’t never seen Titanic.”~~
- “My sister has never seen Titanic.”
- “My sister hasn’t seen Titanic.”

Present Perfect with already, yet, recently, lately, and just

The words already, yet, recently, lately, and just all refer to a recent and non-specific time. (A specific time would be “yesterday” or “three hours ago” or last Friday,” and in these cases we would use the simple past).

Already and yet

Already can be used in positive statements and questions.

- “I’ve already read today’s newspaper.”
- “Have you already paid the electric bill?”
- “She’s finished the test already.”

Note: *Already* can go in between “have/has” and the past participle (as in the first two examples) or at the end of the sentence.

Yet can be used in negative statements and questions.

- “We haven’t cleaned the house yet.”
- “Has he told you the good news yet?”
- “Have they booked their tickets yet?”

Note: *Yet* usually goes at the end of the sentence or phrase.

Recently, lately, and just

Recently and lately can be used in positive statements, negative statements, or questions:

Recently

- “He’s recently lost some weight.”
- “I haven’t seen her recently.”
- “Have you spoken to Beth recently?”

Lately

- “I’ve gotten a lot of spam e-mails lately.”
- “Adam and Jessica haven’t been to church lately.”
- “Have you seen any good movies lately?”

Just (usually means *very* recent) is typically only used in positive statements and questions:

- “Don’t touch the walls – I’ve just painted them and they’re still wet.”
- “What book have you just finished reading?”

American English

In spoken American English, we often use the simple past with already, yet, and just:

- “Did you book the tickets yet?”
- “I already replied to the e-mail.”
- “We just got back from the gym.”

Quiz 2: Present Perfect with ever, never, already, recently, lately, and just

Question 1 - Has anyone _____ told you that you have lovely eyes?

- ever
- never
- lately

Question 2 - My husband's sick, so he hasn't been able to help me with the housework _____.

- just
- never
- lately

Question 3 - She's _____ taken two weeks of vacation this year.

- lately
- already
- ever

Question 4 - Have you eaten lunch _____?

- yet
- ever
- just

Question 5 - Sorry, Mr. Greene isn't available at the moment. He's _____ stepped out for lunch.

- a. just
- b. yet
- c. lately

Question 6 - He's _____ gotten any type of recognition for his hard work at the company.

- a. recently
- b. already
- c. never

Question 7 - They've _____ bought a house - the sale was finalized last week.

- a. ever
- b. recently
- c. never

Present Perfect with for/since

The present perfect is also used with **for** and **since** to talk about actions that began in the past and continue to the present.

- "I've lived here since 2004."
- "I've lived here for 8 years."

Since is used with a **point in time**, and means "from that point in time until the present." Use **since** with dates (2011, January, Tuesday, etc.), times (6:15, noon, this morning, etc.), and past events (I was a child, he graduated from college, etc).

Since is always used with the present perfect, and not the simple past:

- "I've gone to the beach every year since I was a child."
(repeated action that continues until today)
- "I went to the beach when I was a child."
(finished action at a specific time in the past; I don't go to the beach today)

For is used with a **time period**, and means "for that period of time until the present." Use **for** with times of any length (five seconds, eight hours, two days, six weeks, nine months, ten years, a decade, centuries, etc.)

Be careful with **for**, because using the present perfect or the simple past can change the meaning:

- "We've lived in Berlin for 6 months." (and we live in Berlin now)
- "We lived in Berlin for 6 months." (and we don't live in Berlin now)

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Quiz: Present perfect with FOR and SINCE

Question 1 - My internet connection hasn't been working _____ the last few minutes.

- a. for
- b. since

Question 2 - He's played the piano _____ he was 12.

- a. for
- b. since

Question 3 - They've owned their car _____ a long time.

- a. for
- b. since

Question 4 - You've been watching TV _____ over three hours.

- a. for
- b. since

Question 5 - Jill hasn't dated _____ her husband left her last July.

- a. for
- b. since

Question 6 - She's been promoted twice _____ 2007.

- a. for
- b. since

Question 7 - We've been waiting for you _____ 7:00!

- a. for
- b. since

Question 8 - We haven't been camping _____ many years.

- a. for
- b. since

Question 9 - Jim's been thinking about the problem _____ hours.

- a. for
- b. since

Question 10 - I haven't worn high heels _____ my wedding.

- a. for
- b. since

Present Perfect Simple / Present Perfect Continuous

How to form the present perfect continuous:

Positive and negative statements:

SUBJECT	AUXILIARY VERB	BEEN	-ING FORM
I	have	been	working here since 1992.
He	hasn't	been	sleeping well lately.

Questions:

QUESTION WORD	AUXILIARY VERB	SUBJECT	BEEN	-ING FORM
How long	have	you	been	studying English?
How long	has	she	been	playing tennis?

In some cases, the present perfect simple and the present perfect continuous are the same:

"I've worked here since 1992." = "I've been working here since 1992."

However, we often use the present perfect progressive to emphasize the **action**, and the present perfect simple to emphasize the **result**:

- "I've been working on the report for three weeks." (emphasizes the action of working)
- "I've finished the project." (emphasizes that the project is done)
- "We've been cleaning the house all afternoon." (emphasizes the action of cleaning)
- "We've already cleaned the bathroom and the kitchen (emphasizes the fact that the bathroom and kitchen are done)

Be careful: Remember that "state" verbs are never used in continuous form.

- ~~"I've been knowing my best friend since elementary school."~~
- "I've known my best friend since elementary school."
- ~~"She's been understanding everything in the advanced class so far."~~
- "She's understood everything in the advanced class so far."

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In spoken English, we often use the present perfect progressive to talk about ways you have spent your time recently:

“Hi, Joanna! What have you been up to lately?”

“I’ve been training for a karate competition.”

“Wow – good luck! And how is your son?”

“He’s good. He’s been studying a lot lately because finals are coming up next week.”

Quiz: Present Perfect Continuous / Present Perfect Simple

Question 1 - Sally's phoned five times this morning - it must be urgent.

- a. Correct
- b. Incorrect

Question 2 - I've been trying to start my car for the past 45 minutes.

- a. Correct
- b. Incorrect

Question 3 - Have you been working out lately? You look stronger.

- a. Correct
- b. Incorrect

Question 4 - How long has she been teaching at this school?

- a. Correct
- b. Incorrect

Question 5 - Have you ever been thinking about getting a masters degree?

- a. Correct
- b. Incorrect

Question 6 - Chris and I have been thinking about moving to Colorado.

- a. Correct
- b. Incorrect

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Question 7 - I've always been wanting a cat, but my father is allergic.

- a. Correct
- b. Incorrect

Question 8 - Jack hasn't gotten home yet.

- a. Correct
- b. Incorrect

Question 9 - We've agreed to sell our business for 2.5 million dollars.

- a. Correct
- b. Incorrect

Question 10 - My daughter has never been believing in Santa Claus.

- a. Correct
- b. Incorrect

Quiz Answers

Quiz 1: Present Perfect

1. b - Incorrect (They've already given...)
2. a - Correct
3. b - Incorrect (Gary has known...)
4. a - Correct
5. a - Correct
6. a - Correct
7. b - Incorrect (We've recently written...)
8. b - Incorrect (Laura has sold...)
9. b - Incorrect (I haven't taken...)
10. b - Incorrect (Have you ever met...)
11. a - Correct
12. b - Incorrect (No, they haven't eaten...)

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13. a - Correct

14. b - Incorrect (Have you ever driven...)

15. a - Correct

Quiz 2: Present Perfect with ever, never, already, recently, lately, and just

1. a - ever

2. c - lately

3. b - already

4. a - yet

5. a - just

6. c - never

7. b - recently

Quiz 3: Present perfect with FOR and SINCE

1. a - for

2. b - since

3. a - for

4. a - for

5. b - since

6. b - since

7. b - since

8. a - for

9. a - for

10. b - since

Quiz 4: Present Perfect Continuous / Present Perfect Simple

1. a - Correct
2. a - Correct
3. a - Correct
4. a - Correct
5. b - Incorrect (ever and never are only used with the present perfect simple)
6. a - Correct
7. b - Incorrect (want is a state verb)
8. a - Correct
9. a - Correct
10. b - Incorrect (believe is a state verb)