

Present Perfect

Construction

The Present Perfect is formed in the following way:

Subject + have/has + past participle (also known as the third form)

Tom has flown to London.

(For a comprehensive list of the most useful conjugated verbs in Business, please see:

<http://londonschool.de/conjugated-english-verbs/>

The auxiliary verb *has* is used with the subject he/she/it. All other times, *have* is used. Native speaker usually use contractions in present perfect i.e. I've (I have) and she's /she has).

- Unfinished time

The underlying idea of the Present Perfect is that it deals with the concept of an ongoing action that started in the past and continues into the present.

Consider the following example:

*"I have worked at Max Mustermann GmbH **since** 2010"*

or

*"I have been working for Max Mustermann GmbH **for** six years."*

In German: *"Ich arbeite seit 2010 / vier Jahren bei der Max Mustermann GmbH."*

Note: 'Since' is used for a point in time (e.g. last week, 2010, April).

'For' is used for a time period (e.g. four days, six years, ten minutes).

A typical mistake here would be *"~~I have worked here since five years.~~"*

This particular sentence is often mistakenly translated into the Simple Present by Business English students but in English, we cannot use the present tenses for an action which started in the past.

For the rules on the Simple Present and Present Continuous, please see:

<http://londonschool.de/simple-present-vs-present-continuous/>

- Talking about experiences

"I have been to China many times."

"I have never tried Indian food."

We use the Present Perfect to describe things we have done or **not** done in our lives. This is normally when one of my students asks me. Hang on, *"I have been to China many times"* – how is this an ongoing or unfinished action? I'm not still in China – I'm back home in Germany!

This is because when we talk about experiences, the timeframe switches to **our lives**. And because we're still living and still gathering experiences, this is unfinished time.

The easiest way to remember this is to remember the rule that Present Perfect is not very specific and is used for **very general statements** about things we have done or not at **some point** in our lives.

Native English speakers start off very broadly:

"I have been to China many times" (In my life)

And then switch to **Simple Past** when they want to talk about **specific instances**.

"The last time I went there was in 2015."

2015 is finished time so the timeframe isn't your life anymore, it's the year (which is over).

A typical mistake here would be ~~"I have been to China in 2015."~~

- Talking about progress in business

Present Perfect can be very useful in business as we need it to discuss progress i.e. What have we done, or not done **so far**. (unfinished time).

Typical examples include:

"Have you sent the email yet?"

"I've phoned twenty customers so far."

"I haven't heard back from the London office yet."

"We've already hit our targets for 2016 and it's only the second quarter"

- Talking about recently completed events that have an impact on now

Finally, Present Perfect is used to talk about events that have **recently finished** but have a very obvious impact on NOW. In this sense, the event is connected to unfinished time.

Typical examples include:

“Harry has broken his leg.”

“I’ve lost my mobile phone.”

“I’ve just eaten a large meal.”

Key words

There are some key words to alert you to the use of Present Perfect. But be careful! These words indicate that Present Perfect will *probably* be present somewhere in this sentence but it may not be used straight away.

Some typical key words and example sentences:

Yet (used in grammatically negative sentences and in questions)

“Have you spoken to Martin yet?”

“I haven’t seen Diana yet. Is she in a meeting?”

Already (used to express surprise that something has happened before you expected it)

“I’ve already sent the contract to the customer.”

“The guests have already arrived.”

Just (used to denote that something happened a very short time ago)

Ayşe: *“Have you seen Martina?”* Katja: *“I’m afraid you’ve just missed her.”*

Ever/Never (used to talk about experiences in your life.)

“Have you ever flown in a helicopter?”

“No, I’ve never flown in a helicopter.”

So far (often used to describe progress)

“I’ve finished six reports so far”

Since/for (As previously mentioned, used to discuss how long an action has been running for).

“I’ve lived in Munich since I was a child.”