



# *Present Perfect*

College of Agriculture  
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English\_4  
Lecture #3

# Introduction:

- 1 Many languages have a past tense to refer to past time, and a present tense to refer to present time. English has these, too, but it also has the Present Perfect, which relates past actions to the present.
- 2 The use of the Past Simple roots an action in the past, with no explicit connection to the present. When we come across a verb in the Past Simple, we want to know *When?*
- 3 The use of the Present Perfect always has a link with the present. When we come across a verb in the Present Perfect, we want to know how this affects the situation now.
- 4 Compare these sentences.  
*I lived in Rome.* (But not any more.)  
*I've lived in Rome, Paris, and New York.* (I know all these cities now.)  
*I've been living in New York for ten years.* (And I'm living there now.)

*She's been married three times.* (She's still alive.)

*She was married three times.* (She's dead.)

*Did you see the Renoir exhibition?* (It's finished now.)

*Have you seen the Renoir exhibition?* (It's still on.)

*Did you see that programme on TV?* (I'm thinking of the one that was on last night.)

*Did you enjoy the film?* (Said as we're leaving the cinema.)

*Have you enjoyed the holiday?* (Said near the end of the holiday.)

*Where have I put my glasses?* (I want them now.)

*Where did I put my glasses?* (I had them a minute ago.)

*It rained yesterday.* (= past time)

*It's been snowing.* (There's snow still on the ground.)

# Perfect aspect

- We use perfect aspect to **look back** from a specific time and talk about things up to that time or about things that are important at that time.

- We use the present perfect to look back from the present:

*I **have always enjoyed** working in Italy. [and I still do]*

*She **has left** home, so she cannot answer the phone.*

- We use the past perfect to look back from a time in the past:

It was 2006. **I had enjoyed** working in Italy for the past five years.

She **had left** home, so she could not answer the phone.

- We use *will* with the perfect to look back from a time in the future:

By next year I will have worked in Italy for 15 years.

She will have left home by 8.30, so she will not be able to answer the phone.

# Present perfect

We use the **present perfect**:

- for something **that started in the past** and **continues in the present**:
- when we are talking about our **experience up to the present**:
- for something that **happened in the past** but is **important in the present**:

- For something **that started in the past and continues in the present:**

*They've **been married** for nearly 50 years.*

*She **has lived** in Liverpool all her life.*

- When we are talking about our **experience up to the present:**

*I've **seen** that film before.*

*I've **played** the guitar ever since I was a teenager.*

*He **has written** three books and he is working on another one.*

- For something that **happened in the past** but is **important in the present:**

*I can't get in the house. I've **lost** my keys.*

*Teresa isn't at home. I think she **has gone** shopping.*

- We normally use the **present perfect continuous** to **emphasize that something is still continuing in the present**:

*It's been raining for hours.*

*I'm tired out. I've been working all day.*



# Present Perfect simple and continuous

See the introduction to the perfect aspect and the continuous aspect in Lecture #2.

These tenses have three main uses:

## 1 Unfinished past

The verb action began in the past and continues to the present. It possibly goes on into the future, as well.

*We've lived in this house for twenty years.*

*Sorry I'm late. Have you been waiting long?*

*I've been a teacher for five years.*

*I've been working at the same school all that time.*

## Notes

- There is sometimes little or no difference between the simple and the continuous.

*I've played* | *I've been playing* | tennis since I was a kid.

- The continuous can sometimes suggest a more temporary situation. The simple can sound more permanent.

*I've been living with a host family for six weeks.*

*The castle **has stood** on the hill overlooking the sea for centuries.*

- Certain verbs, by definition, suggest duration, for example, *wait, rain, snow, learn, sit, lie, play, stay*. They are often found in the continuous.

*It's been raining all day.*

*She's been sitting reading for hours.*

- Remember that state verbs rarely take the continuous.

*I've known Joan for years.* \*~~I've been knowing~~

*How long have you had that car?* \*~~have you been having~~

*I've never understood why she likes him.* \*~~I've never been understanding~~

## 2 Present result

The verb action happened in the past, usually the recent past, and the results of the action are felt now.

*You've changed. What have you done to yourself?*

*I've lost some weight.*

*I've been doing some exercise.*

*I'm covered in mud because I've been gardening.*

In this use, the simple emphasizes the completed action. The continuous emphasizes the repeated activities over a period of time.

## Notes

- Certain verbs, by definition, suggest a short action, for example, *start, find, lose, begin, stop, break, die, decide, cut*. They are more often found in the simple.

*We've decided to get married.*

*I've broken a tooth.*

*I've cut my finger.*

In the continuous, these verbs suggest a repeated activity.

*I've been stopping smoking for years.*

*You've been losing everything lately. What's the matter with you?*

*I've been cutting wood.*

- The use of the simple suggests a completed action.

*I've painted the bathroom.*

The use of the continuous suggests a possibly incomplete action.

*I'm tired because I've been working.* (Finished? Not finished?)

*Someone's been drinking my beer.* (There's some left.)

- The continuous can be found unqualified by any further information.

*I'm wet because I've been swimming.*

*We're tired because we've been working.*

*'Why are you red?' 'I've been running.'*

The simple sounds quite wrong in this use.

~~\*I've swum. \*We've worked. \*I've run.~~

- Sometimes there is little difference between the Past Simple and the Present Perfect.

Where 

<i>did you put</i>
<i>have you put</i>

 | *my keys?*

- American English is different from British English. In American English, these sentences are correct.

*Did you hear the news? The President resigned!*

*Did you do your homework yet?*

*Your father just called you.*

*I had breakfast already.*

### 3 Indefinite past

The verb action happened at an unspecified time in the past. The actual time isn't important. We are focusing on the experience at some time in our life.

*Have you ever taken any illegal drugs?*

*She's never been abroad.*

*Have you ever been flying in a plane when it's hit an air pocket?*

#### Note

- Notice these two sentences.

*She's been to Spain.* (At some time in her life.)

*She's gone to Spain.* (And she's there now.)

The first is an example of indefinite past.

The second is an example of present result.

*Thank you*

