

10 Past Simple or Present Perfect (2); ago, for, since

Compare the Past Simple and the Present Perfect:

Past Simple

Present Perfect

<p>1 Look at this example of the Past Simple: <i>There were many earthquakes last century.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">past (now)</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; padding: 2px 10px;">last century</div> <p>Note that <i>last century</i> is a period of past time. It ended before now.</p>	<p>Look at this example of the Present Perfect: <i>There have been many earthquakes this century.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">past (now)</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; padding: 2px 10px;">this century</div> <p>Note that <i>this century</i> is a period of time that includes now (the time of speaking).</p>
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<p>2 We use the Past Simple to talk about events or situations in a period of past time: A: <i>How long did you work in your last job?</i> B: <i>I worked there for four years.</i></p> <p><i>Did you go to the cinema last week?</i> <i>Sheila did not go to work yesterday.</i></p> <p>We use the Past Simple for events in the lifetime of someone who is dead: A: <i>Did your grandmother ever visit Canada?</i> B: <i>Yes, she spent several holidays there.</i></p>	<p>We use the Present Perfect for events or situations in a period of time that includes now: A: <i>How long have you worked here?</i> B: <i>I've worked here since last summer.</i> <i>(I still work here.)</i></p> <p><i>Have you been to the cinema this week?</i> <i>Sheila has not gone to work today.</i></p> <p>We use the Present Perfect for events in the lifetime of a living person: A: <i>Have you ever visited Canada?</i> B: <i>Yes, I've had several holidays there.</i></p>
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3 Notice how a sentence with the Past Simple and one with the Present Perfect can give similar information from different points of view. Notice the use of **ago**, **for** and **since**:

<p><i>Pam went to live in Dublin 5 years ago.</i></p>	<p><i>Pam has lived in Dublin for five years.</i> <i>Pam has lived in Dublin since her wedding.</i> <i>(or ... since she got married.)</i></p>
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(For more details about **ago**, **for** and **since**, see unit 41.)

Practice

A Complete the sentences with the Past Simple or the Present Perfect of the verb in brackets.

- 0 (be) There were a lot of accidents last year, and there have been a lot this year, too.
- 0 (see) I have not seen Jane today, but I saw her yesterday.
- 1 (win) Our team is very good. We _____ two competitions last year, and we _____ two this year as well.
- 2 (make) The factory _____ more than 1,000 motorbikes this year; it _____ not _____ so many last year.
- 3 (be) I'm worried about Mary. She _____ ill last week, and she _____ ill most of this week as well.
- 4 (work) Joe _____ not _____ hard last month, but he _____ hard this month.
- 5 (earn) I _____ a lot of money this year - much more than I _____ last year.

6 (rain) It _____ not _____ much last year here, and it _____ not _____ much this year, either.

B In the brackets, the first year is when the person was born. If there is a second year, it is when the person died. Put the verbs into the Past Simple or the Present Perfect.

0 Susan Cowley (1947–) is an artist. She has painted (paint) in many different styles and she has had (have) exhibitions in 14 countries.

1 Timothy Spinks (1846–1927) was a biologist. He _____ (study) the plants of New Zealand, and he _____ (write) several books on biology.

2 Claire Fox (1957–) is a doctor. She _____ (develop) new treatments for several diseases, and she _____ (make) several TV programmes about medicine.

3 Catherine Knight (1824–1883) was a nurse. She _____ (work) mainly with soldiers, and she _____ (spend) most of her life trying to improve their lives.

4 Steven Brock (1963–) is a golf player. He _____ (win) several competitions, and he _____ (earn) a lot of money from advertising different products.

C Use the words in brackets to express the same information from a different point of view. Use the Present Perfect or the Past Simple.

0 Ben stopped smoking five years ago.

(not/smoke/for) Ben hasn't smoked for five years.

0 Jane has lived in Bristol for two years.

(move/to/ago) Jane moved to Bristol two years ago.

1 Anna and John moved to London after their wedding.

(live/in/since) _____

2 Mary started working in France 6 months ago.

(work/for) _____

3 Pam stopped playing tennis when she was 15.

(not/play/since) _____

4 Fred hasn't eaten meat for 2 years.

(stop/eating/ago) _____

D Summary exercise: study units 9 and 10, before you do this exercise.

Use the words in brackets, and put them in the gaps in the Past Simple or the Present Perfect.

Policeman: Mr. Leach, how many times 0 have you been (you/be) in prison?

Jim Leach: Twice.

Policeman: When 1 _____ (you/finish) your last prison sentence?

Jim Leach: I 2 _____ (come) out of prison about 6 months ago.

Policeman: How long 3 _____ (you/live) in this town?

Jim Leach: About 7 years. I 4 _____ (move) here when I got married.

Policeman: So you 5 _____ (be) married for seven years.

Jim Leach: No, my wife 6 _____ (leave) me two years ago.

Policeman: 7 _____ (you/see) her in the last few weeks?

Jim Leach: No, she 8 _____ (phone) me a few days ago. I 9 _____ (meet) her once about a year ago, but I 10 _____ (not/see) her since then.