

present tenses

Look at the sample sentences:

- a) He **does** English exercises every day.
- b) He **is doing** English exercises now.
- c) I **work** at a bank.
- d) I **am working** on a project at the moment.

present simple	present continuous
repeated actions (a)	action at the moment of speaking (b)
permanent activities (c)	temporary activities (d)

present tenses

STATIVE VERBS

Look at the sample sentences:

- She **hates** our new colleague.
- I really **need** a new car.
- I **don't believe** what he's saying.
- What **do** you **want** to do now?

There are verbs that we do NOT usually use in the continuous form. They are called **stative verbs** and they are often connected to thinking, opinions and feelings, i.e. they do NOT describe actions.

We use them **in the simple form** although we are speaking about something that is true now.

present tenses

STATIVE VERBS

These are **examples of stative verbs**:

verbs of emotion: *dislike, hate, like, love, prefer*

verbs of mental state: *believe, know, need, remember, understand, want, wish*

verbs of possession: *have, own, possess*

verbs of senses: *hear, see, smell, sound, taste*

other: *contain, depend, include, involve, mean*

present tenses

STATIVE VERBS

Read the sentences and complete them with the correct form of the verb in brackets (present simple or present continuous).

1. I **come** (*come*) from Slovakia but at the moment I **'m studying** (*study*) in the Czech Republic.
2. We **'re interviewing** (*interview*) a lot of people at the moment because we **need** (*need*) to hire five new staff members.
3. What time **do** you usually **finish** (*finish*) at work?
4. What **is** Mr Goodwin **doing** (*do*)? He's not in his office.
5. The price **includes** (*include*) flights and three nights' accommodation.
6. They normally **export** (*export*) a lot to Germany but they **aren't getting** (*not get*) many orders at the moment.

past tenses

Look at the sample sentences:

- a) *In 2002, I **spent** a semester in Greece.*
- b) *Yesterday at one o'clock they **were having lunch** with a client.*
- c) *When the phone **rang**, I **answered** it.*
- d) *When the phone **rang**, I **was talking** to a colleague.*

past simple	past continuous
action that happened in the past (a)	action that was in progress at a particular moment in the past (b)
chronological sequence of actions (c)	action that was in progress and which was interrupted by another action (d)

past tenses

Read the sentences and complete them with the correct form of the past simple or the past continuous.

1. What were you doing (do) yesterday at 1 pm?
2. Ingvar Kamprad started (start) IKEA in his small farming village in Sweden in 1943.
3. Who did you hire (hire) to do the catering at your last conference?
4. When I was (be) in Germany, I tried to speak German but people didn't understand (not understand) what I was saying.
5. When Mrs Young arrived (arrive) at the reception, my secretary went (go) to meet her.
6. He was driving (drive) to a conference when his car broke down (break down).

present perfect

subject + *have/has* + 3rd form (past participle)

Look at the sample sentences:

- My sister **has worked** as an au-pair.
- **Have** you **ever worked** in a bank?
- **I've never been** to China.
- **We've just heard** the news.
- He **hasn't finished yet**.
- She's **already left**.
- **How long have** you **lived** here?
- He's **been** the CEO **since** 2011.
- **I've worked** here **for** 7 years.

past experience when you do not say when exactly it happened (period of time up to now)

with *ever* and *never*

with *just*, *yet* and *already*

state that started in the past and still continues (with *since* and *for*, questions with *how long*)

present perfect

Read the present perfect sentences and complete them with the correct word. Use each word only once.

ALREADY, EVER, FOR, NEVER, SINCE, YET

1. We haven't received any complaints **yet**.
2. She's **already** finished the report. She's a quick worker.
3. They've been in France **for** five months.
4. Have you **ever** worked for a German company?
5. I've known Charles **since** he joined our company.
6. I've **never** given a presentation in front of so many people. This is the first time for me.

present perfect vs past simple

Look at the sample sentences:

- a) *I've spent* a semester in Greece.
- b) *In 2002, I spent* a semester in Greece.
- c) *He's been married* for 30 years and is still very happy.
- d) *He was married* for 30 years and then got divorced.

present perfect	past simple
past action when you do not say when exactly it happened (a)	with words that describe finished times, e.g. <i>yesterday, last week</i> (b)
with <i>for</i> , to talk about action that started in the past and still continues (c)	with <i>for</i> , to talk about action that happened during a period of time and has finished (d)

present perfect vs past simple

Read the sentences and complete them with the correct form of the present perfect or the past simple.

1. I **haven't emailed** (not email) him yet.
2. You don't have to introduce us. We **'ve met** (meet).
3. Last year I **went** (go) to Milan for a trade fair.
4. **Have** you ever **spoken** (speak) in front of a large audience?
5. The company **has grown** (grow) a lot since they **started** (start) in 2010.
6. Steve Jobs **was** (be) CEO of Apple for 14 years. He **died** (die) in 2011.

used + infinitive

Look at the sample sentence:





- *He **used to work** as an accountant. (= He has a different job now.)*
- *What **did you use(d) to do** during the summer holidays when you were a child?*
- *I **didn't use(d) to like** my boss, but now I do.*

Used + infinitive is used to talk about **past habits and repeated actions** that are no longer true and about **states** that have changed. It is NOT used for single events.

The structure has no present form. (For present habits, we use the present simple + *usually*, e.g. *I usually finish work at 5 pm.*)

used + infinitive

Read the past simple sentences and decide where USED + INFINITIVE is also suitable.

- I had a very important test last week.*
 (It was a one-time action.)
- She had a PC but then she changed to a Mac.*
 She **used to have** a PC but then she changed to a Mac.
- Our previous boss held meetings several times a week.*
 Our previous boss **used to hold** meetings several times a week.
- I worked very hard last year.*
 (This does not describe a past habit or repeated actions.)

present perfect simple

subject + *have/has* + past participle

Look at the sample sentences:

- *I've been to the USA.*
- *I've just seen our new secretary.*
- *I haven't seen her yet.*
- *He's been in marketing since 2002.*
- *I've known him for 3 years.*
- *This is the most boring meeting I've attended.*
- *They've been fired.* (= They have no job now.)

past action when time is not mentioned

with *just, already, yet*

with *for* and *since* with **STATIVE VERBS** (to describe a state that started in the past and still continues)

with superlatives, *the first, the second* etc.

past action with a present result

present perfect continuous

subject + *have/has* + *been* + present participle (*-ing* form)

Look at the sample sentences:

- How long **have** you **been running** the company?
- **I've been running** the company **since** 1998.
- In the past few weeks, he **hasn't been working** hard enough.
- **I've been writing** emails all morning. I'm exhausted.

continuous activity that started in the past and is still true, with *for* and *since*

with *in the past x days/weeks* etc.,
recently

continuous activity that has just finished, often with a present result

present perfect simple vs continuous

Look at the sample sentences:

- a) We **have prepared** your contract.
- b) We **have been preparing** your contract.
- c) I **have written** ten emails this morning.
- d) I **have been writing** emails all morning.

present perfect simple	present perfect continuous
past activity completed recently (a)	activity that is still going on (b)
to give a number or a quantity as a result of an activity (c)	to emphasize duration of an activity, which may have finished but has a present result, or has not finished yet (d)

present perfect simple vs continuous

Read the sentences and complete them with the correct form of the present perfect simple or the present perfect continuous.

1. Our company donates to a children's home. We 've contributed (*contribute*) €500 this year.
2. The car prices have been falling (*fall*) ever since the EU introduced new laws.
3. Since August, our turnover has increased (*increase*) by 10%.
4. I'm sorry I'm so behind with my work but I 've been travelling (*travel*) so much recently that I haven't had (*not have*) enough time to do anything.
5. How long have you been using (*use*) the new equipment?

past perfect

subject + *had* + past participle

Look at the sample sentences:

- When she **arrived**, the meeting **started**.



- When she **arrived**, the meeting **had (already) started**.

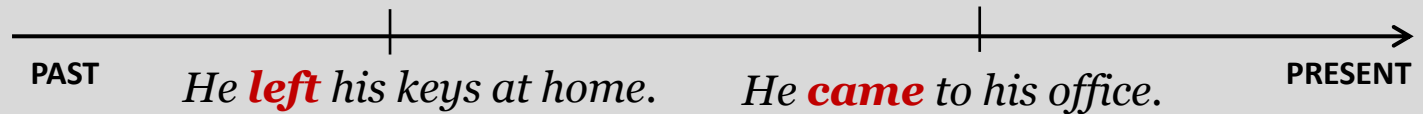


We use the **past perfect** to talk about past actions that happened before other actions in the past.

past perfect

We do NOT have to use the **past perfect** when we mention past events chronologically.

Look at the example:



- He **left** his keys at home and did not realize it until he **came** to his office.

However, must use the **past perfect** when we “go back” to talk about an earlier event.

- When he **came** to his office he realized that he **had left** his keys at home.

past perfect

Look at the forms:

- *He told me he **had finished**.*
- *I thought I **hadn't sent** the email yet.*
- *How long **had** you **worked** there when she joined the company?*

We do NOT have to use the **past perfect** when we use a time conjunction (e.g. *after*, *as soon as*, *when*) to talk about two past actions that happened one after the other.

- ***As soon as** she **finished** her exams, she applied for a job.*

However, we can use the **past perfect** after a time conjunction to emphasize that the first action was completed before the second started.

- ***As soon as** she **had finished** her exams, she applied for a job.*

past perfect

Look at the sample sentence again:

- *When she **arrived**, the meeting **had started**.*

*In this sentence, it is also possible to use **by the time** instead of **when**:*

- ***By the time** she **arrived**, the meeting **had started**.*

past perfect

Read the sentences and complete them with the correct form of the past perfect or past simple. Use the past perfect when possible.

1. He was (*be*) in a very good mood because we had won (*win*) a major contract.
2. She set up (*set up*) her first company ages ago.
3. I recognized (*recognize*) my colleague at once although I hadn't seen (*not see*) him for almost 10 years.
4. Mrs Fitzherbert had left (*leave*) her office before we arrived (*arrive*).
5. By the time they offered (*offer*) me the job, I had signed (*sign*) a contract with another company.

used to vs would

Look at the sample sentence:

- We ***used to cooperate*** with a Norwegian company.
- We ***would go*** to Milan for a trade fair every autumn.

Both *used to* and *would* can be used to talk about **repeated actions and events in the past**.

Only *used to* refers to **past states**.

- We ***used to have*** expensive company cars. (NOT *We would have expensive company cars.*)

used to vs would

Read the sentences and decide whether WOULD could replace USED TO.

1. *Before I bought a car, it used to take me 2 hours to get go work.*



2. *The company used to belong to an American multinational.*



3. *I used to think that I wanted to work in advertising. Now I'm an accountant.*



4. *In the old days, we used to send hundreds of letters every month. Now we send emails.*



aspect

simple, continuous and perfect

There are **three verb aspects** in English:

Simple – the action is viewed as complete

Continuous – the action is viewed as having duration

Perfect – the action is viewed as completed before another action

simple aspect

The simple aspect describes actions that are viewed as **complete** or **permanent**.

Look at the sample sentences:

- *We **sell** a full range of insurance products.*
- *The investment bank **collapsed** in September 2008.*
- *The conference **will start** on Friday.*
- *She always **arrives** at work early.*
- *He always **wore** a suit to work.*

PERMANENT FACT

ACTION COMPLETED
IN THE PAST

SIMPLE FUTURE FACT

PRESENT AND PAST
HABITS

continuous aspect

The continuous aspect describes actions that are **viewed as having duration or temporary**, not completed or permanent.

Look at the sample sentences:

- *He **was checking** accounts when he spotted the error.*
- *They've **been producing** cars for over 50 years.*
- *I'm **dealing** with enquiries at the moment, as my colleague is ill.*
- *She's **been trying** to reach them to make a reservation.*

ACTIVITY IN PROGRESS

FOR A LONG TIME

TEMPORARY

SEVERAL TIMES

perfect aspect

The perfect aspect describes actions that are viewed as **completed before another action or connected to a later action.**

Look at the sample sentences:

- *The office was in a mess because someone **had broken** in.*
- *We'll **have repaid** the loan by the end of September.*
- *I've **finished** the report. (i.e. It is ready.)*

SOME TIME BEFORE THEN

RESULT OF AN
EARLIER ACTION

aspect

Compare the use of tenses in the pairs of sentences. Decide what the differences in meaning are.

1. *When we got to the premises, the presentation **started**.*

It started after we arrived. **Sequence of actions.**

*When we got to the premises, the presentation **had started**.*

It started before we arrived. **An earlier past event.**

2. *At 1 pm, we **had** lunch with our major customer.*

The lunch started at 1 pm.

*At 1 pm, we **were having** lunch with our major customer.*

The lunch started before 1 pm. **An activity in progress.**

aspect

Compare the use of tenses in the pairs of sentences. Decide what the differences in meaning are.

3. *He's so selfish.*

Generally true.

*He's **being** so selfish.*

He's not usually a selfish person. **Temporary behaviour.**

4. *She **was explaining** her proposal when he arrived.*

He arrived in the middle of her explanation. **Interrupted action.**

*She **explained** her proposal when he arrived.*

He arrived and then she explained it. **Sequence of actions.**

aspect

Compare the use of tenses in the pairs of sentences. Decide what the differences in meaning are.

5. She **was** CEO of the company for 8 years.

They have a new CEO now. **The situation ended.**

She's **been** CEO of the company for 8 years.

She still is the CEO. **The situation has not ended yet.**

6. I've **checked** my emails.

The emails are checked now. **The focus is on the result.**

I've **been checking** my emails.

That is why I haven't done anything else. The emails may still not be checked. **The focus is on the process.**

sources:

Duckworth, M. (2003) *Business Grammar and Practice (Oxford Business English)*. 1st edition. Oxford University Press.

Emmerson, P. (2002) *Business Grammar Builder*. 1st edition. Macmillan Education.

Soars, J. and L. *New Headway Advanced*. 1st edition. Oxford University Press.

Swan, M. (2005) *Practical English Usage (New International Student's Edition)*. 1st edition. Oxford University Press.