

Present Simple

The **Present Simple tense** is the most basic tense in English and uses the base form of the verb (except for the verb *be*). The only change from the base is the addition of *s* for third person singular.

How do we make the Present Simple tense?

There are two basic structures for the Present Simple:

1. Positive sentences

subject	+	main verb
		Present Simple

2. Negative and question sentences

subject	+	auxiliary <i>do</i>	+	main verb
		conjugated in Present Simple		
		do, does		base

Look at these examples with the main verb *like*:

	subject	auxiliary verb	main verb	
+				

Present Continuous

(also called *Present Progressive*)

We often use the **Present Continuous tense** in English. It is very different from the [Present Simple](#) tense, both in structure and in use.

How do we make the Present Continuous tense?

The structure of the Present Continuous tense is:

subject	+	auxiliary <i>be</i>	+	main verb
		conjugated in Present Simple		
		am, are, is		present participle (-ing)

The auxiliary verb (be) is conjugated in the Present Simple: *am, are, is*

The main verb is invariable in present participle form: *-ing*

For negative sentences we insert **not** between the auxiliary verb and the main verb.

For question sentences, we **exchange** the subject and the auxiliary verb.

Look at these example sentences with the Present Continuous tense:

	subject	auxiliary verb		main verb	
+	I	am		speaking	to you.
+	You	are		reading	this.
-	She	is	not	staying	in London.
-	We	are	not	playing	football.
?	Is	he		watching	TV?
?	Are	they		waiting	for John?

Present Perfect Tense

The Present Perfect tense is a rather important tense in English, but it gives speakers of some languages a difficult time. That is because it uses concepts or ideas that do not exist in those languages. In fact, the **structure** of the Present Perfect is very simple. The problems come with the **use** of the tense. In addition, there are some differences in usage between British and American English.

In this lesson we look at the **structure** and **use** of the Present Perfect tense, as well as the use of **for** and **since**, followed by a **quiz** to check your understanding.

The Present Perfect tense is really a very interesting tense, and a very useful one. Try not to translate the Present Perfect into your language. Just try to accept the concepts of this tense and learn to "think" Present Perfect! You will soon learn to **like** the Present Perfect tense!

How do we make the Present Perfect tense?

The structure of the Present Perfect is:

subject	+	auxiliary <i>have</i>	+	main verb
		conjugated in Present Simple		
		have, has		past participle

The auxiliary verb (have) is conjugated in the Present Simple: *have, has*

The main verb is invariable in past participle form: *-ed (or irregular)*

For negative sentences we insert **not** between the auxiliary verb and the main verb.

For question sentences, we **exchange** the subject and the auxiliary verb.

Look at these example sentences with the Present Perfect tense:

	subject	auxiliary verb		main verb	
+	I	have		seen	ET.
+	You	have		eaten	mine.
-	She	has	not	been	to Rome.
-	We	have	not	played	football.
?	Have	you		finished?	
?	Have	they		done	it?

Contraction with Present Perfect

When we use the Present Perfect in speaking, we often contract the subject and auxiliary verb. We also sometimes do this in informal writing.

I have	I've
You have	You've
He has	He's
She has	She's
It has	It's
John has	John's
The car has	The car's
We have	We've
They have	They've

- You've told me that before.
- John's seen *Harry Potter*.

In negative sentences, we may contract the auxiliary verb and "not":

- You haven't won the contest.
- She hasn't heard from him.

How do we use the Present Perfect tense?

This tense is called the **Present** Perfect tense. There is always a connection with the past *and* with the **present**.

We use the Present Perfect to talk about:

- experience
- change
- continuing situation

Present Perfect for experience

We often use the Present Perfect to talk about **experience** from the past. We are not interested in **when** you did something. We only want to know **if** you did it:

I have seen an alien.		
He has lived in Bangkok.		
Have you been there?		
We have never eaten caviar.		
past	present	future
!!!		
The action or state was in the past.	In my head, I have a memory now.	

Connection with past: the event was in the past

Connection with present: in my head, **now**, I have a memory of the event; I **know** something about the event; I have **experience** of it

Present Perfect for change

We also use the Present Perfect to talk about a **change**, or **new** information:

I have bought a car.		
past	present	future
-	+	
Last week I didn't have a car.	Now I have a car.	
John has broken his leg.		
past	present	future
+	-	

Yesterday John had a good leg.	Now he has a bad leg.	
Has the price gone up?		
past	present	future
+	-	
Was the price \$1.50 yesterday?	Is the price \$1.70 today?	
The police have arrested the killer.		
past	present	future
-	+	
Yesterday the killer was free.	Now he is in prison.	

Connection with past: the past is the opposite of the present

Connection with present: the present is the opposite of the past

Present Perfect for continuing situation

We often use the Present Perfect to talk about a **continuing situation**. This is a state that started in the **past** and continues in the **present** (and will probably continue into the future). This is a **situation** (not an action). We usually use **for** or **since** with this structure.

I have worked here since June.		
He has been ill for 2 days.		
How long have you known Tara (for)?		
past	present	future
The situation started in the past.	It continues up to now.	(It will probably continue into the future.)

Connection with past: the situation started in the past.

Connection with present: the situation continues in the present.

***For* and *Since* with Present Perfect tense**

We often use **for** and **since** with perfect tenses:

- We use **for** to talk about a **period** of time: *five minutes, two weeks, six years*
- We use **since** to talk about a **point** in past time: *9 o'clock, 1st January, Monday*

for	since
a period of time	a point in past time
- - - - -	- • - - - - -
20 minutes	6.15pm
three days	Monday
6 months	January
4 years	1994
2 centuries	1800
a long time	I left school
ever	the beginning of time
etc	etc

Look at these example sentences using *for* and *since* with the Present Perfect tense:

- I have been here **for** twenty minutes.
- I have been here **since** 9 o'clock.
- John hasn't called **for** six months.
- John hasn't called **since** February.
- He has worked in New York **for** a long time.
- He has worked in New York **since** he left school.