

Present perfect tense

1. Affirmative form

The **present perfect** is a tense that many learners have trouble understanding completely. However, it is not as complicated as it may seem. This tense is used to speak of actions and events that **happened in the past** but that still have an **impact on the present**.

Example : I **have had** breakfast this morning. > **Breakfast** is finished, but the **morning** isn't.

If we express the same information **this afternoon**, we will say **I had breakfast this morning** because both **breakfast** and **morning** are finished.

The **present perfect** tense uses the auxiliary **have** in the present tense form followed by the **past participle** of the main verb.

- I **have been** there.
- You **have eaten** it.
- He/she/it **has seen** her.
- We **have found** it.
- You **have read** it.
- They **have lost** the game.

2. Negative form

As always, it is the auxiliary that takes the negation **not**.

- We **have not finished** yet.
- He **has not arrived** yet.

This negative structure can be contracted in two ways :

- I **haven't** // I've **not**
- You **haven't** // you've **not**
- He / she / it **hasn't** // he's **not** / she's **not** / it's **not**
- We **haven't** // we've **not**
- They **haven't** // they've **not**

The first way usually favoured in order to avoid confusion between the 3rd person of the verb **to be** which has the same contracted form.

3. Interrogative form

The interrogative structure is formed in the same way as all the other tenses, i.e. by inverting the auxiliary and the pronoun or noun.

- **Have** I **won** the lottery?
- **Have** you **won** the lottery?
- **Has** he/she/it **won** the lottery?
- **Have** we **won** the lottery?
- **Have** you **won** the lottery?
- **Have** they **won** the lottery?

4. Already, yet, ever, never, just

These words are often used with the *present perfect* tense ;

- 'You must tell him!' – 'He **has already been told.**' (He was told in the past)
- 'Can I print this now?' – 'No, I **haven't finished it, yet.**' (It is not ready for printing)
- '**Have you ever visited** Buckingham Palace?' (In your life)
- 'No, **I've never been** to London.' (In my life until now)
- 'Where's Tony?' – 'He **has just left.**' (He left a couple of minutes ago)

A golden rule : NEVER use past time indications such as *yesterday, last week, when I was a child* etc. when speaking in the *present perfect* tense.

But this is possible : I **haven't seen John yet today.** Have you? (This is fine. Today is not finished).

5. Since and for

These are two other words which are frequently used with the *present perfect* tense.

They are used to indicate the length of time between the past action or event and the present time.

- We **have been** here **since** 10 o'clock. (indicates the starting point)
- We **have been** here **for** three hours. (indicates the length of time)
- They **have been** married **for** a long time.
- He **hasn't been** to work **since** last Thursday.
- I **haven't been** to the cinema **for** five years.