Understanding the Difference

Both tenses talk about the past, but they have different jobs.

Present Perfect: Connects past and present

- **Life experiences:** *I've been to Paris three times.*
- **Recent actions:** *She's just arrived.*
- **Unfinished time:** *I've worked here since 2020.*
- **Changes:** *The city has changed a lot.*

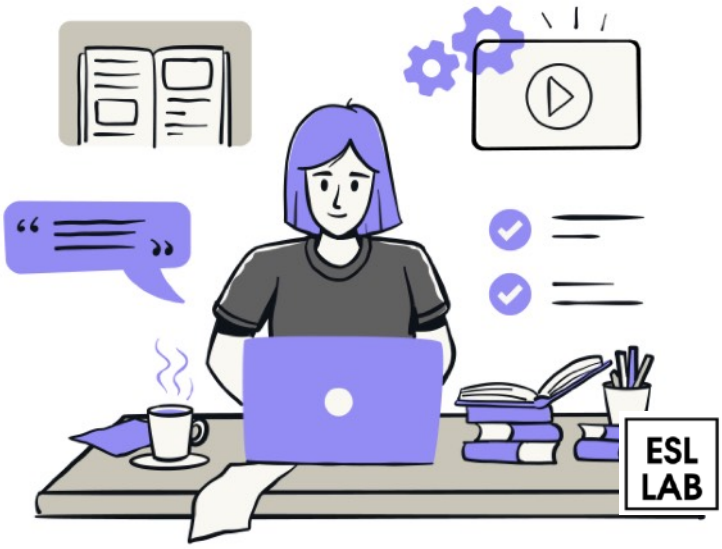
Past Simple: Completed actions in finished time

- **Specific past time:** *I went to Paris last year.*
- **Biographical facts:** *She arrived at 3pm.*
- **Finished time:** *I worked there from 2018 to 2020.*
- **Historical facts:** *The city changed in the 1990s.*

Exercise 1
Read each sentence. Which tense is used? Why?
Match with the function.

1. I've lived in London for three years. - _____
2. She moved to London in 2021. - _____
3. Have you ever tried sushi? - _____
4. I tried sushi for the first time yesterday. - _____
5. The train has just arrived. - _____
6. The train arrived at 10:30. - _____
7. This city has changed dramatically. - _____
8. I worked there for five years. - _____

A. Specific past time
B. Life experience
C. Recent action/news
D. Unfinished time (still true)
E. Change/result visible now
F. Finished time period



Exercise 2
Put these time expressions in the correct column.

yesterday, just, ever, last week, already, in 2020, yet, ago, since, for, this morning, recently, never, when I was young, so far, three days ago, before, this year

Present Perfect	Past Simple	Both
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Exercise 3
Complete this conversation with the correct tense. Notice how we start general (PP) then give specific details (PS).

A: So, where are you from?
B: I'm from Brazil, but I _____ (live) in the UK for five years now.
A: Oh really? When _____ (you / move) here?
B: I _____ (move) here in 2019 for work.
A: Nice! _____ (you / visit) other European countries?
B: Yes, I _____ (be) to about ten countries. Last summer I _____ (go) to Italy and Greece.
A: That sounds amazing! I _____ (never / be) to Greece.
B: You should go! I _____ (love) it there.

Exercise 4
Complete the interview with Present Perfect or Past Simple.

1. A: How long _____ (you / work) in marketing?
   B: I _____ (work) in marketing for six years.
2. A: Where _____ (you / study)?
   B: I _____ (study) at Manchester University.
3. A: _____ (you / ever / manage) a team?
   B: Yes, I _____ (manage) a team of five people in my last job.
4. A: Why _____ (you / leave) your last company?
   B: I _____ (leave) because I wanted new challenges.
5. A: _____ (you / work) on international campaigns?
   B: Yes, last year I _____ (work) on a campaign for the European market.

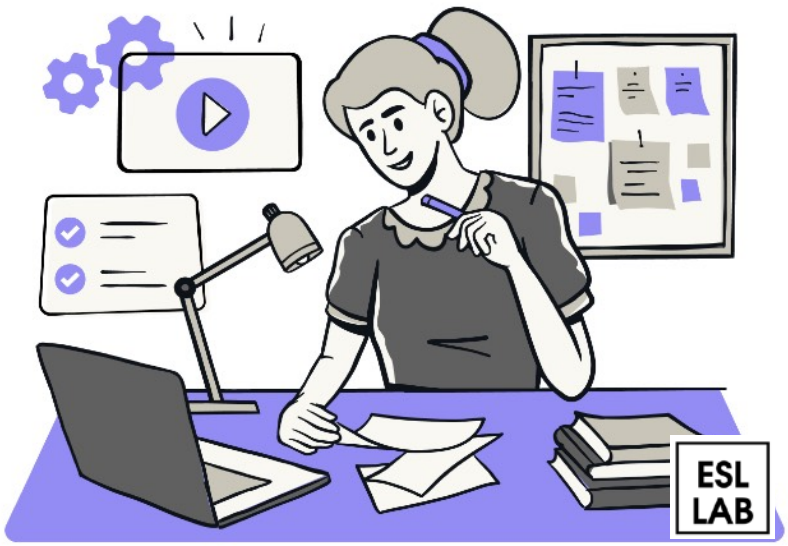
ESL LAB

Exercise 5
Choose the correct tense. Think: is the time period finished or still continuing?

1. I _____ (have written / wrote) three reports today.
2. I _____ (have written / wrote) five reports yesterday.
3. We _____ (have had / had) two meetings this week.
4. We _____ (have had / had) four meetings last week.
5. She _____ (hasn't called / didn't call) me today.
6. She _____ (hasn't called / didn't call) me yesterday.
7. How many books _____ (have you read / did you read) this year?
8. How many books _____ (have you read / did you read) last year?

Exercise 6
Complete these news announcements with the correct tense.

1. The government _____(announce) new tax reforms. They _____ (announce) them at a press conference this morning.
2. OMG! I _____ (just / see) a celebrity at the coffee shop! I _____ (see) him five minutes ago and I couldn't believe it!
3. Manchester United _____ (win) the championship! They _____ (win) 3-1 in last night's final match.
4. Oh no! I _____ (lose) my phone! I think I _____ (leave) it at the gym.
5. Great news! My sister _____ (have) a baby! She _____ (give) birth at 6am this morning.



Exercise 7
Complete these work-related sentences with the correct form and time expression: *just, already, yet,* or *recently*.

1. I _____ (just / finish) the report. [Very recent, moments ago]
2. We _____ (already / send) the invoice. [Earlier than expected, done]
3. _____ you _____ to the client's email _____? [Expected but maybe not done]
4. No, I _____. I'll do it now. [Expected but not done, negative]
5. She _____ (recently / start) a new position. [Not long ago, indefinite recent past]
6. They _____ (just / arrive) at the office. [Very recent]
7. _____ you _____ the figures _____? - Yes, I _____ them.

Exercise 8
Complete with 'for' or 'since' and the Present Perfect.

Remember

FOR = period of time (three years, six months, a long time)
SINCE = starting point (2020, Monday, I was a child)

1. I _____ (know) her _____ ten years.
2. They _____ (live) here _____ 2019.
3. We _____ (not see) him _____ ages.
4. She _____ (be) a teacher _____ she graduated.
5. How long _____ (you / work) there? - _____ three months.
6. I _____ (have) this car _____ last year.
7. We _____ (not speak) _____ the argument.
8. He _____ (play) guitar _____ most of his life.

Exercise 9
Find and correct the mistake in each sentence.

1. I have seen that movie yesterday.
   _____
2. She lives here since 2020.
   _____
3. Did you ever visit Paris?
   _____
4. I have finished my homework two hours ago.
   _____
5. We are friends for ten years.
   _____
6. He just called me.
   _____
7. I have been there last summer.
   _____
8. A: When did you become a teacher?
   B: I became a teacher since 2018.
   _____



Exercise 10
Complete this email with the correct tense.
Notice how both tenses work together naturally.

Hi Emma!

How are you? I _____ (not write) to you for ages! So much _____ (happen) since we last spoke.

First of all, I _____ (change) jobs! I _____ (leave) the marketing company in June and _____ (start) at a tech startup in July. I _____ (be) there for three months now and I absolutely love it!

Also, remember I _____ (tell) you I wanted to learn Spanish? Well, I _____ (finally / start) classes! I _____ (go) to my first lesson last week.

What about you? _____ you _____ (you / finish) your master's degree yet? And how is your family? I _____ (not see) any photos on Instagram recently.

Let's catch up soon!
Love, Sarah

ESL LAB