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.*

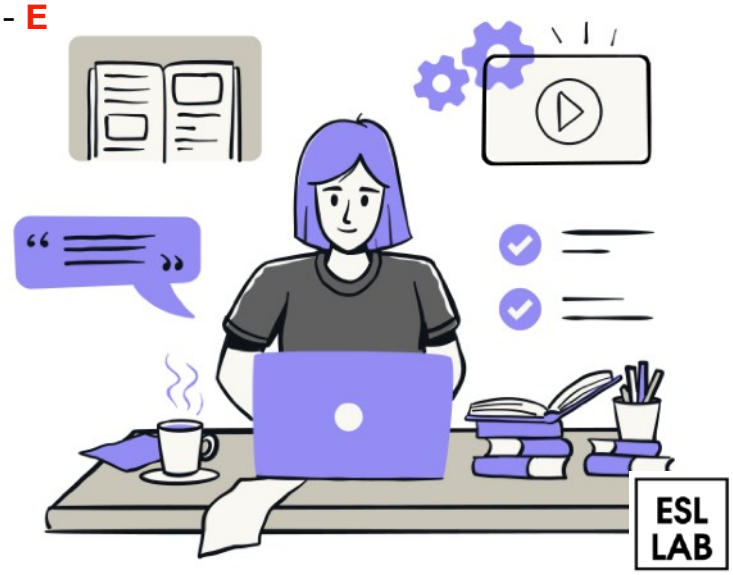
Past Simple: Completed actions in finished time

- **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. - **D**
2. She moved to London in 2021. - **A**
3. Have you ever tried sushi? - **B**
4. I tried sushi for the first time yesterday. - **A**
5. The train has just arrived. - **C**
6. The train arrived at 10:30. - **A**
7. This city has changed dramatically. - **E**
8. I worked there for five years. - **F**

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
just, already, yet, ever, never, since, for, recently, so far, before	**yesterday, last week, in 2020, ago, when I was young, three days ago**	**this morning, this year (if the time period isn't finished yet)**

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 **have lived** (live) in the UK for five years now.
A: Oh really? When **did you move** (you / move) here?
B: I **moved** (move) here in 2019 for work.
A: Nice! **Have you visited** (you / visit) other European countries?
B: Yes, I **have been** (be) to about ten countries. Last summer I **went** (go) to Italy and Greece.
A: That sounds amazing! I **have never been** (never / be) to Greece.
B: You should go! I **loved** (love) it there.

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

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

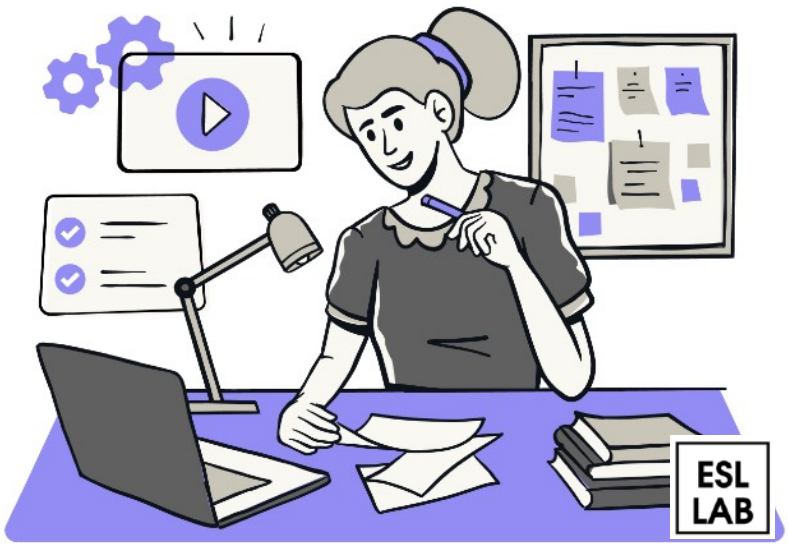
ESL LAB

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

1. I **have written** (have written / wrote) three reports today. **[It's still today, unfinished time]**
2. I **wrote** (have written / wrote) five reports yesterday. **[Yesterday is finished]**
3. We **have had** (have had / had) two meetings this week. **[This week isn't finished yet]**
4. We **had** (have had / had) four meetings last week. **[Last week is finished]**
5. She **hasn't called** (hasn't called / didn't call) me today. **[Today isn't finished - she might still call]**
6. She **didn't call** (hasn't called / didn't call) me yesterday. **[Yesterday is finished]**
7. How many books **have you read** (have you read / did you read) this year? **[This year continues]**
8. How many books **did you read** (have you read / did you read) last year? **[Last year is finished]**

Exercise 6
Complete these news announcements with the correct tense.

1. The government **has announced** (announce) new tax reforms. They **announced** (announce) them at a press conference this morning.
2. OMG! I **have just seen** (just / see) a celebrity at the coffee shop! I **saw** (see) him five minutes ago and I couldn't believe it!
3. Manchester United **have won** (win) the championship! They **won** (win) 3-1 in last night's final match.
4. Oh no! I **have lost** (lose) my phone! I think I **left** (leave) it at the gym.
5. Great news! My sister **has had** (have) a baby! She **gave** (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 **have just finished** (just / finish) the report. [Very recent, moments ago]
2. We **have already sent** (already / send) the invoice. [Earlier than expected, done]
3. **Have** you **replied** to the client's email **yet**? [Expected but maybe not done, question]
4. No, I **haven't replied yet**. I'll do it now. [Expected but not done, negative]
5. She **has recently started** (recently / start) a new position. [Not long ago, indefinite recent past]
6. They **have just arrived** (just / arrive) at the office. [Very recent]
7. **Have** you **checked** the figures **yet**? - Yes, I **have already checked** 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 **have known** (know) her **for** ten years.
2. They **have lived** (live) here **since** 2019.
3. We **haven't seen** (not see) him **for** ages.
4. She **has been** (be) a teacher **since** she graduated.
5. How long **have you worked** (you / work) there? - **For** three months.
6. I **have had** (have) this car **since** last year.
7. We **haven't spoken** (not speak) **since** the argument.
8. He **has played** (play) guitar **for** most of his life.

Exercise 9
Find and correct the mistake in each sentence.

1. I have seen that movie yesterday.
   I saw that movie yesterday.
2. She lives here since 2020.
   She has lived here since 2020.
3. Did you ever visit Paris?
   Have you ever visited Paris?
4. I have finished my homework two hours ago.
   I finished my homework two hours ago.
5. We are friends for ten years.
   We have been friends for ten years.
6. He just called me.
   He has just called me.
7. I have been there last summer.
   I was there last summer.
8. A: When did you become a teacher?
   B: I became a teacher since 2018.
   A: I have been 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 **haven't written** (not write) to you for ages! So much **has happened** (happen) since we last spoke.

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

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

What about you? **Have** you **finished** (you / finish) your master's degree yet? And how is your family? I **haven't seen** (not see) any photos on Instagram recently.

Let's catch up soon!
Love, Sarah