

38 Present perfect or past simple?

1 Differences in use

PRESENT PERFECT	PAST SIMPLE
Single or repeated actions in the past, when we don't know the date of the action or it isn't important: <i>I've driven an automatic car before.</i> <i>We've been to the theatre many times.</i> Time expressions: <i>before, ever, already, just and yet</i>	Single or repeated actions that happened at a definite time in the past: <i>I drove a racing car in the summer.</i> <i>We went to the theatre twice last month.</i> Time expressions: <i>yesterday, last month, in 2007, etc.</i>
Situations that started in the past and are still continuing: <i>Tom has worked at the garage for two years.</i> (He's working there now.) with <i>for</i> + period of time, or <i>since</i> + date	Situations that started and finished in the past: <i>Alex worked at the garage for two years.</i> (He isn't working there now.) with <i>for</i> to say how long the situation lasted
One or more completed actions in a time period that is still continuing: <i>He's sold fifteen cars this month.</i> Time expressions: <i>this morning/evening, today, so far, etc.</i>	Completed actions in a time period that is finished: <i>He sold twenty cars in August.</i> <i>I sold my Toyota two weeks ago.</i> with <i>ago</i> to mean '(a period) before now'

⚠ It is sometimes difficult to hear /v/ in *I've, we've, you've, they've* and /z/ in *he's and she's*. It is easy to confuse the present perfect and past simple:

PAST SIMPLE *I finished work. He started early. We carried the bags.*

PRESENT PERFECT *I've finished work. He's started early. We've carried the bags.*

The other words around the verb can usually help you to understand which form you hear:
*I finished work **an hour ago**. I've **just** finished work.*

🔊 **Pronunciation** ▶ 1.18

2 Giving news

We often use the present perfect to introduce new information:

I've decided to get a new car. I'm going to look at some tomorrow.

'Julian has passed his driving test.' 'Oh, that's good news!'

News reports often start a new item with the present perfect:

The Terracotta Army exhibition has opened in London.

There has been an earthquake in southern China.

After we have introduced new information with the present perfect, we usually give more details with the past simple:

Julian has passed his driving test. He took it on Wednesday.

The Terracotta Army exhibition has opened in Paris. It was opened by the Minister of Culture.

Practice

1 Choose the correct words in *italics*.

- 0 She's been to the doctor twice *this month* / *last month*.
 1 I've driven this car *many times* / *in 2007*.
 2 Jane *passed* / *has passed* her driving test last week.
 3 Steve loves his job. He *did* / *'s done* it since he was twenty-two.
 4 Caroline's bought a lot of clothes *this year* / *two years ago*.
 5 Rick *has finished* / *finished* the course six months ago.
 6 'George has arrived.' 'Really? When *has he got* / *did he get* here?'

2 GRAMMAR IN USE Complete the text with suitable forms of the words in brackets. Use the present perfect or past simple. In one place, both are possible.

3.11 Listen and check.

Electric cars – Latest update

A small American car manufacturer (0) *has just announced* (just announce) that its experimental electric car, the Lexington X1, will go into production this year. Markton Automobiles, of Detroit, Michigan, (1) (make) the announcement at last month's Auto Show in Geneva.

Although there are now many electric cars on the market, so far manufacturers

(2) (not be able) to produce one that can really compete with existing

petrol cars. There are two major problems – speed and distance. Up until now, electric cars

(3) (be) either too slow or unable to travel far enough without recharging

their batteries. Markton Automobiles claim that they (4) (overcome)

these difficulties with a new type of solar panel which continually recharges the batteries. The

company (5) (not give) the press exact details yet, but they claim they

(6) (already test) the car successfully under all kinds of weather conditions.

A Japanese company (7) (first design) the engine in 2007. But over the last

few years Markton (8) (adapt) the design and increased its power.

The company (9) (invite) ten journalists to test-drive the new car last week.

Their reports (10) (be) mainly positive, although we will have to wait for the full test results before we know if this really is the electric car that everyone is waiting for.

3 GRAMMAR IN USE Complete the conversation with words and phrases from the box. There are three extra words or phrases. 3.12 Listen and check.

hasn't told told has told have you done 've used was 's been
 happened had just has decided 've just fallen has given

ALEC Hi, Judi, I'm home!

JUDI Shh. Don't disturb the children. They (0) *'ve just fallen* asleep.

ALEC OK. I'll be quiet. So, how are things? What (1) today?

JUDI Not much. It (2) a quiet day really. What about you?

ALEC Quite an exciting day. The boss (3) me a new job!

JUDI Wow. That's fantastic. What (4)?

ALEC Sylvia (5) to move Eddie to the Toronto office. So I've got his job!

She (6) me about it at lunchtime. It (7) a real surprise!

JUDI Well, I hope it's more money because we (8) all our savings!