

OVERVIEW

USES OF PERFECT TENSES

Present Perfect

We use Present Perfect to talk about things that took place:

- during a period that includes past and present:
They've been waiting here for an hour.
- in the past, but we're not saying exactly when:
Don't tell me he's bought another new car!
- in the past with an effect or result in the present:
I'm afraid I've forgotten my key.
- with the time adverb *just* meaning 'a short time ago' (American English uses Past Simple here):
She's just gone out.

Past Perfect

We use Past Perfect to talk about things that took place:

- before something else in the past:

I took the decision after I had spoken to John.

- during a period before an event in the past:

All day I'd been feeling nervous but the feeling vanished as soon as I saw her.

Future Perfect

We use Future Perfect to talk about:

- something that will be finished before a specified time in the future:

I'll have signed nearly a hundred letters by tonight.

for, since, already, yet, still, often, etc

We often use Perfect tenses with these time words.

- Note important variations in their position:

*We **still** haven't heard from Olga. We'd **still** not heard from her by the time evening arrived. (= more formal)*

*I haven't heard a convincing explanation of her absence **yet**.*

*She's phoned **already**. Has she phoned **already**? She's **already** phoned. She hasn't **already** phoned, has she?*

WATCH OUT!!!!!!

- We don't use Present Perfect when an exact past time is mentioned and there is no connection with the present:

~~We've been to London in 1997~~

WRONG

We went to London in 1997.

RIGHT

WATCH OUT!!!!!!

- But we can use the Present Perfect if the period mentioned includes the past and present:

We've been here since half past six.

I haven't done much work today.

It's been raining for ages.

WATCH OUT!!!!!!

- We use Past Perfect for something that happened before something else. We can only use it with another Past tense:

*I **went** to see him because his wife **had asked** me to.*

- We omit *will* in time clauses

~~*I'll phone you as soon as we will have arrived.*~~

WRONG

I'll phone you as soon as we have arrived.

RIGHT

Present Perfect

Present Perfect often combines with other tenses in the same sentence

USES WITH OTHER PRESENT TENSES

We use Present Perfect with other Present tenses:

- with report/comment verbs or phrases (*guess, imagine, suppose, etc.*):

I reckon Gloria's been held up in traffic.

Do you suppose they've forgotten they're meant to be here?

USES WITH OTHER PRESENT TENSES

- with the phrase *This is / it's / That's the first / second /only, etc. time ... :*

This is the first time he's been late.

It's the only time I've ever really got angry with him.

USES WITH OTHER PRESENT TENSES

- when an event is unusual or unique in your life (often with a superlative and *ever or never*):

I've never met anybody who is so absent-minded.

USES WITH OTHER PRESENT TENSES

- However, we commonly use a **Past** tense to refer to somebody who is dead:

*Princess Diana **was** the least extraordinary person **I've ever read** about.*

USES WITH OTHER PRESENT TENSES

- when commenting on the present results of something in the past (usually with *appear, seem, sound, etc.*):

He sounds as if he has run all the way here.

It seems they've already decided without consulting us.

USES WITH PAST TENSES

We use Present Perfect with Past tenses:

- to describe states or events that have continued since a time in the past (with *since*, *ever since*, *etc.*):

*He's **been** a bit more careful **since** he **had** that warning.*

***Ever since** I first **heard** it I've **been** trying to find a recording of that song*

USES WITH PAST TENSES

- to describe long-term or repeated feelings and thoughts about past events:

*I've often **wondered** why I **decided** to become a teacher.*

*I've always **felt** we did the wrong thing when we **took** her **on** as an assistant.*

USE WITH ANOTHER PRESENT PERFECT

We use Present Perfect with another Present Perfect:

- to describe two states that have existed since a time in the past:

Since I've known him, he's always worn the same sweater.

USE WITH FUTURE FORMS

- In time clauses (after *when, as soon as, until, before, etc.*) we don't use *will*, and so the **Future Perfect** *will have done* is not possible.

In these cases we use the Present Perfect to refer to the future:

We'll continue the meeting when he's recovered his composure.

USE WITH *SINCE* AND *YET*

- Note the position and emphatic uses of *since* and *yet*:

*There was no news this morning but **we've since** learned that she's in Rome.*

*I **haven't met** anyone **yet** who can run as fast as him.*

*or: **I've yet to meet** anyone who . . .*

COMMON PHRASES

- *They've made it!*
(= *They've succeeded*)
- *I've had enough.*
(= *I'm fed up. I don't want to do any more*)
- *You've had it!*
(= *You're in trouble*)
- *That's torn it!*
(= You, we, etc. have done something that someone else will complain strongly about)

COMMON PHRASES

- *Now you've done it!*

(= *You've done something seriously wrong*)

- *She's arrived.*

(= *She's achieved fame, success, acceptance, etc. at last*)

- *He's lost it.*

(= *He's lost his patience or self-control*)

- *You've got me there!*

(= *Good point: I've no idea what the solution is*)

Correct these sentences

- a It's the third time he missed a meeting.
- b As soon as he will finish, he's going home.
- c. This is the best lasagna I ever have.
- d Since we've known each other, he always shows impecable manners.
- e Since I've met her, I've never seen her lose her temper.

Answers

- a It's the third time he has /he's missed a meeting.
- b As soon as he finishes (or: has finished), he's going home.
- c This is the best lasagna I have/I've ever had.
- d Since we've known each other, he has/he's always shown impeccable manners.
- e Since I met her, I've never seen her lose her temper.

Tick *the sentences that are correct.*

Correct those that are not.

- a Do you think Vicky's always known the truth about us?
- b That's been the second time you've forgotten to post something for me.
- c I haven't seen Peter since he begins seeing his new girlfriend.
- d Ever since we met, you never asked me what I prefer to do.
- e In all my life, I never spoke to someone who is quite so stupid.

f I don't think Paul and Carol have seen much of each other of late.

g This is the only occasion that I've seen him wearing a tie.

h Since he's lived here, he was usually extremely friendly.

i They'll join us after they'll get a bite to eat.

j He says he hasn't yet come to a final decision.

Answers

- a ok
- b That's the second time you've forgotten to post something for me.
- c I haven't seen Peter since he began seeing his new girlfriend.
- d Ever since we met, you have/you've never asked me what I prefer to do.
- e In all my life, I have/ I've never spoken to someone/anyone who is quite so stupid.
- F ok
- g. ok
- h Since he's lived here, he has/he's usually been extremely friendly.
- i They'll join us after they've got/ had a bite to eat.
- J ok

Other Perfect forms

PAST PERFECT

Not always necessary

- Past Perfect emphasizes that we are talking about a period before a time in the past. If the time sequence is clear (e.g. because we use *after*), both Past Simple and Past Perfect are possible. At other times Past Perfect is essential to understanding the sequence, and we often add *already, as soon as, or until*:

I got to work after Simon arrived / had arrived.

When I arrived, they'd already started. (= they started before I arrived)

When I arrived, they started. (= I arrived before they started)

With definite time

- Unlike Present Perfect, we can use Past Perfect with a definite time reference:

*I arrived at nine o'clock but he **had got there at eight.***

With *before*

- There is one exception to the time sequence rules on Past Perfect. When we use *before*, the verb in Past Simple can refer to something that takes place before the verb in Past Perfect. The first action may prevent the second from happening:

*The waiter **took** my plate away **before I'd finished** eating.*

*I **was blamed** for it **before I'd even had** a chance to defend myself.*

Unfulfilled plans

- We use Past Perfect with report verbs and with *hope, intend, expect, etc.* to talk about plans that have not yet been fulfilled. *Had* is usually stressed in speech with this use:

*I **had hoped** to talk to him but he was too busy to listen.*

*I **had thought** of phoning him but decided against it.*

FUTURE PERFECT

With *by*

- We can often use Future Perfect with the preposition *by* or the phrase *by the time* meaning 'at some point before the time mentioned or indicated':

*It's taking her so long to write that book that **by the time** she's finished it people **will have forgotten** the incident it's based on.*

Predicting

- We can also use *will have done* to say what we think has probably happened:

*There's no point phoning: **they'll have gone out.***

Predicting

- We can use *should/ought to* or *may/might* instead of *will* if there is some uncertainty about the prediction of present or future:

I should have finished making this cake by the time Sue comes home. (= I think I will have, but I'm not sure)

USES OF PERFECT INFINITIVES

We use Perfect infinitives:

- after link verbs like *seem* and *appear* to refer to a previous time period (an ordinary *to*-infinitive will usually refer to the present or future):

There seems to have been some sort of mistake.

USES OF PERFECT INFINITIVES

- after phrases expressing *emotions* and *feelings*:

*I'm sorry **to have kept** you waiting.*

*She was felt **not to have met** the standards required.*

PERFECT *-ING* FORMS

- When talking about results and time, we can use a Perfect -ing form to emphasize that one thing happens before another:

*I didn't remember **having met** her before.*

***Having finally grasped** what I meant, he got down to work.*

WATCH OUT

- Perfect passives can sometimes be confusing because we use both *be* (= *passive*) and *have* (= Perfect) as auxiliaries:

*The refugees **have been prevented** from entering the country.*

*This picture is thought to **have been painted** by a pupil of Rembrandt's.*

Correct any sentences that are unacceptable.

- a By the time he is 50, he will live in this country for half his life.
- b It's a surprise party and they won't know anything about it until they got here.
- c They're probably planning a quiet evening together; I know they won't have guessed what we're doing.
- d The other seventy guests should be arrived before Mikis and Maria.
- e By the time we will have finished, everybody will have eaten and drunk as much as they can.

Answers

- a By the time he is 50, he will have lived/will have been living in this country for half his life.
- b It's a surprise party and they won't know anything about it until they get here.
- d The other seventy guests should have arrived before Mikis and Maria.
- e By the time we have finished, everybody will have eaten and drunk as much as they can.

Continuous forms

USES OF PERFECT CONTINUOUS TENSES

- Like other Perfect tenses, Perfect Continuous tenses focus on a past period that leads up to a later one.

Perfect Continuous tense, as with other Continuous tenses, show that an event continues and/or is temporary:

I've been meaning to tell you about it since the weekend.

Next October I'll have been playing with this team for ten years.

He'd been driving for hours and he needed a rest

- We use Past or Present Perfect Continuous to talk about something that is incomplete, just finishing or about to change.

The Past and Present Perfect Simple can suggest the action is finished:

I'd been staring at the computer screen all evening when a solution suddenly struck me.

I've been reading 'War and Peace' again. (= I may not have finished)

I've read War and Peace again. (= I've finished)

- The Continuous can emphasize the action; the Simple focuses on the result:

*What **have you been doing?** (= tell me about your activities)*

*What **have you done?** (= tell me the result of your activities)*

- The difference between choosing Continuous or Simple may only be a matter of emphasizing that something is continuing and/or temporary:

I've been waiting here for over an hour.

(= emphasizing that I still am)

USING PAST CONTINUOUS FOR PLANS

- We can use Past Continuous to talk about plans in the past:

*We **were meeting** at 8 o'clock and I was already late.*

- We use was going to to talk about plans in the past that we still haven't carried out or that we no longer intend to carry out:

*I **was going to** phone you but I forgot*

- We can use *I **was thinking**..* . to introduce vague future plans:
- *I **was thinking** of going to London this weekend.*

USING PAST CONTINUOUS FOR POLITE REQUESTS

- We often use Past Continuous to introduce polite requests, suggestions or inquires so that they become more an invitation to discuss the subject than a demand for a yes or no answer:

I was thinking - would you mind swapping seats?

I was wondering if you wanted to go out this evening.

Were you looking for anything in particular?

CONTINUOUS INFINITIVES

- Verb and other structures that can be followed by a to-infinitive can also be followed by a Continuous infinitive to emphasize that something is still continuing or is temporary:

*It's ridiculous for him **to be driving** in central Athens at his age.*

*Several cyclists are thought **to have been taking drugs** during the race.*

PERFECT CONTINUOUS PASSIVE

- The Perfect Continuous passive is very uncommon because it involves two forms of *be*:

The Botley Road has been being widened for the past six weeks.

Tick the most suitable underlined verb.

Sometimes both may be possible

I don't normally go to the cinema. Not because I don't like it but because it's just a habit I have never got into. However, on this occasion I decided to go because my friends had been constantly going / had constantly gone (1) on about this film all week and eventually wore me down. It starred / was starring (2) some ephemeral Hollywood actor whom I had vaguely heard of but couldn't put a face to. We got to the cinema early to find people were already waiting / already waited (3) outside which suggested that my friends weren't the only ones who thought it was worth seeing although I could still think of several other things I would rather having been doing / do (4) at that moment.

In the end, the film turned out / was turning out (5) to be not half as bad as expected, though I would have preferred / would have been preferring (6) something with a bit more action. The plot centered on two men who were planning to carry out some immensely complicated robbery, though what they completely failed to realize/ were completely failing to realize (7) was that all the time their plans were being closely monitored / were closely monitored (8) by the police. Somewhat unpredictably, however, they got away with it because they changed / were changing 9) their plans at the last minute. It was okay but I'm not thinking / I don't think (10) of going again.

answers

- (1) had been constantly going/ had constantly gone
- (2) starred / was starring
- (3) were already waiting
- (4) have been doing
- (5) turned out
- (6) would have preferred
- (7) completely failed to realize
- (8) were being closely monitored /were closely monitored
- (9) they changed
- (10) I'm not thinking