

One Question Fixes Most Tense Mistakes

Present Perfect vs Simple Past: does it connect to now?

WHAT THIS LESSON IS ABOUT

- Not a grammar table.
- Not another list of rules.
- Just one question that handles most tense mistakes.

You do not need to memorise when to use Present Perfect. You only need to ask: **does this connect to now?**

THE REAL PROBLEM

You have studied Present Perfect. You know how it looks. But in a real conversation you still hesitate, or use the wrong one.

x *I lived here for three years.*

v *I have lived here for three years.*

Why: You still live here. The time is not finished.

x *Did you ever visit Japan?*

v *Have you ever visited Japan?*

Why: "Ever" means in your life until now. Still open.

x *I have seen that film yesterday.*

v *I saw that film yesterday.*

Why: "Yesterday" is finished. Closed. Use Simple Past.

Nobody told you the one principle underneath all the rules. It is not about form. It is about time.

KEY IDEA

Does this connect to now?

Yes, the time is still open or continuing? Use **Present Perfect**.

No, the time is finished and closed? Use **Simple Past**.

That one question handles 90% of mistakes.

TIME MARKER CHEAT SHEET

Time marker	Use
<i>ever, never, yet, already, just</i>	Present Perfect
<i>for, since, recently, so far</i>	Present Perfect
<i>yesterday, last week, last year</i>	Simple Past
<i>in 2020, three days ago, ago</i>	Simple Past
<i>when I was young</i>	Simple Past

For vs Since: For = how long (for three hours). Since = when it started (since 2019).

PRACTICE

Present Perfect or Simple Past?

1. I _____ in London since 2020.
2. We _____ to Paris last summer.
3. _____ you ever _____ sushi?
4. She _____ here for five years.
1. I _____ that movie yesterday.

Answers

1. have lived
2. went
3. Have you ever tried
4. has worked
5. saw

TODAY'S SMALL ACTION

Before your next sentence in English, ask: is the time finished, or does it connect to now?

Fix one sentence today. That is enough.

Want more practice? The members edition has 10 extra sentences, a mistake recognition exercise, and a self-check quiz.