

ENGLISH

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BE PERFECT AS
PRESENT PERFECT!

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matters

poradnik językowy

Language Guide

BE PERFECT AS PRESENT PERFECT!

Poradnik językowy jest bezpłatnym dodatkiem do English Matters nr 51/2015.

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Ilustracja na okładce: Feedough

Present Perfect Simple is very often described by language learners as the most difficult tense to use. A lot of students simply refrain from using it and always replace it with Past Simple instead, which makes their English sound poor.

In this supplement, English Matters would like to show that Present Perfect Simple is not as black as it is painted. Although the number of contexts in which the tense is used is probably infinite, the number of general rules where Present Perfect should step in is definitely finite. Sometimes, the proper use of a tense is just a matter of knowing the cardinal differences between one tense and its closest rival – in this case Past Simple. So read on about the Present Perfect Simple and you will never again be afraid to use it.

tense | czas gramatyczny

to refrain from sth | powstrzymywać się przed czymś

to replace sth with sth | zastępować coś czymś

instead in'sted | zamiast

not to be as black as sb/sth is painted | nie taki diabeł straszny, jak go malują

infinite 'ɪnfɪt | nieskończony

to step in | wkraczać

finite 'faɪnɪt | skończony, ograniczony

proper | właściwy

matter | kwestia

cardinal | główny, podstawowy

to read on | czytać dalej

Present Perfect Tenses (Present Perfect Simple/Present Perfect Continuous) are often used with the following words and phrases:

never, ever, before, already, yet, since, for, lately, recently, so far, just now, this week/month, recently, for the last week/month, just, only just, these days, for the past (three) months, still, up to now

Examples:

Sheila has never been to Brighton.

Have you ever been humiliated in public?

Have you visited this place before?

Now, I remember. I've already been here!

The guests haven't come yet.

Tom's been interested in football since college.

I haven't heard from her lately. I hope she hasn't got into trouble.

Mary has had two driving lessons so far.

The bride has been on a diet for the last month.

No one has seen them together recently.

following | następujący

to humiliate sb | *te hju' miltɪt 'sambədi* | upokarzać kogoś

to get into trouble | wpadać w tarapaty

bride | panna młoda

Today never dies, but, **contrary to** a popular **belief**, it is more often used with Past Simple rather than Present Perfect tenses. Here is how Native Speakers would use it:

John: Have you seen Mary today?

Bill: Yes, I saw her this morning.

Dad: Did you clean your room today, like I asked?

Daughter: No, sorry, I haven't done it yet.

Gill: Have you ever been **diving**?

Sarah: I went today for the first time. It was amazing.

Today, I passed my driving test!

Today was the day when I finally **came of age** as an actor.

Gill: What have you done today?

Mary: Well, I went to work, **picked up** the kids from school, then I made dinner. Just the usual things, you know?

BUT:

Anne: Today has been one of the most wonderful days of my life.

Mike: Me, too.

AND:

Newsreader on TV: Today has seen heavy fighting in the capital.

contrary to sth | wbrew czemuś

belief | *tu:* opinia

diving | nurkowanie

to come of age | dojrzewać

to pick sb up from

X | odbierać kogoś skądś

Usage:

1. states up-till-now

I've always hated pasta.

I've had this car since 1999.

How long have you run that confectionery?

This mansion has been on sale for years.

Actions/states that started in the past and are still continuing or have just finished.

2. indefinite past

Peter has worked in a bank.

She's composed music before.

I've been to Dubai three times.

Have you seen him recently?

They have just/recently moved to Bath.

Situations that have happened in the past or recent past, but it is unknown when they have happened exactly.

3. habits up-till-now

I've always laughed at his jokes.

I've eaten porridge for breakfast for as long as I can remember.

4. resultative

I'm afraid Donna won't be able to visit you in the foreseeable future. She's gone to Germany.

OMG, I think I've just twisted my ankle.

Your shipment has just arrived.

The situation now is the result of a past event.

usage ju:stɪdʒ | użycie

up-till-now | do teraz

to run sth | tu: prowadzić coś

confectionery | cukiernia

mansion | willa

indefinite | nieokreślony

porridge | owsianka

resultative | tu: odnoszący się do wyniku

in the foreseeable future | w niedalekiej przyszłości

OMG = oh my God! | o mój Boże!

to twist sth | skręcać coś

ankle | kostka

shipment | przesyłka

What else do we know about Present Perfect?

- no definite past time reference
Someone has stolen my wallet!
AND NOT: *Someone has stolen my wallet yesterday!*
- refers to events that have happened in the past (usually recent past), with a result now.
I've broken my arm.
My house has been burgled.
I'm afraid I've forgotten to bring the wedding rings.
I've bought the dress, so I'm going to the party.
- describes what someone has done so far; the achievements of a living person
The author has written five books so far.
- is used when it is said how long the situation has lasted
The number of inhabitants of the Island has fallen sharply since we last visited the place.
The popularity of the politician has increased over the last decade.

Study the sentence carefully!

*The number of inhabitants of the Island has fallen sharply since we last **visited** the place.*

Although in the first/main clause the speaker uses Present Perfect tense, in the second clause, after 'since', the speaker is obliged to use Past Simple.

Exception!

It is possible to use Present Perfect in both sentences if both situations are ongoing.

Since I've been on a diet I've lost 15 pounds.

have gone vs. have been

He **has been** to China. = He has returned from China.

He **has gone** to China. = He hasn't returned. He is still in China.

reference | odwołanie, odniesienie

to burgle sth | włamywać się

wedding ring | obrączka

achievement | osiągnięcie

to last | trwać

inhabitant | mieszkaniec

to increase | zwiększać się

to be obliged to do sth | być zobowiązanym do zrobienia czegoś

to be ongoing | trwać

pound | funt

A clash between Present Perfect and Past Simple:

I've lived in Paris for three years. (I'm still there).

I lived in Paris for three years. (I'm not there any more).

I've lived in Paris. (It happened in the past, but we don't know when).

Finished time vs. unfinished time

The singer has recorded five albums. (The singer may record more albums.)

The singer recorded five albums. (The singer will not record any more albums. The singer is probably dead.)

He often rode a bike to work. (He doesn't do it any more.)

He has often ridden a bike to work. (It has happened in the past, but the past is indefinite. He may ride a bike again. There is a link between the past and the present).

A matter of interpretation

I've read the report.

I read the report.

I'm sure I heard him say that he was moving to Spain.

I'm sure I've heard him say that he was moving to Spain.

The speaker decides if he/she sees the connection between the action described and the present or the past.

Both sentences may refer to a situation that happened in the morning.

It is the speaker's choice how the time reference is perceived.

clash | starcie, sprzeczność, potyczka

to record sth | nagrywać coś

link | związek

matter | kwestia

to refer to sth | odnosić się do czegoś

to perceive sth | postrzegać coś

Songs to practise Present Perfect:

R. Campbell & J. Dykes “Brighton in the Rain”

U2 “I still haven’t found what I’m looking for”

Rihanna “Where have you been”

Linkin Park “What I’ve done”

Creedence Clearwater Revival “Have you ever seen the rain?”

Brandy “Have you ever”

Michael Bublé “Haven’t met you yet”

Sinead O’Connor “Nothing Compares To You”

Mini dialogues:

1

Jonathan: I haven’t seen you for ages! How have you been?

Mary: I’ve been busy with moving houses and new responsibilities at work.

2

Mel: Hi Chris! What have you been up to?

Chris: Well, I’ve just got married and together with my wife we’ve decided to move to London.

Mel: Congrats on your wedding! Have you ever been to London?

Chris: I’ve visited London three times over the past two years. I’ve grown fond of the place.

3

Tom: Have you heard about Christian?

Betty: No, I haven’t. What’s the news?

Tom: He has lost his mind!

4

Andy: Have you ever been here before?

Jodie: Yes, many times. It’s one of my favourite places in town. I’ve always visited it by myself. I’ve never brought anyone else here. At least, not until now.

to move house | przeprowadzać się

responsibility | obowiązek

to be up to sth | porabiać coś

congrats | *pot.* gratulacje

to be fond of sth | lubić coś

to lose one’s mind | oszaleć, postradać zmysły

at least | przynajmniej

5

Chris: Have you ever eaten Chinese food?

Kate: Yes, I have.

Chris: When did you last have Chinese food?

Kate: I ate Chinese food on Saturday.

6

On the phone:

Betty: Betty speaking. Could I speak to John, please?

Tom: He has gone to the bank. He will be back soon. Would you like to leave a message?

Betty: No, thank you. I'll call again in an hour.

Tom: OK, bye.

Quote corner:

Anyone who has never made a mistake has never tried anything new.

Albert Einstein.

We judge ourselves by what we feel capable of doing, while others judge us by what we have already done.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Unless you try to do something beyond what you have already mastered, you will never grow.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

He who has never hoped can never despair.

George Bernard Shaw

I have been a selfish being all my life, in practice, though not in principle.

Jane Austen

He who has begun has half done.

Homer

Isn't it strange that I who have written only unpopular books should be such a popular fellow?

Albert Einstein

to judge sb | oceniać kogoś

to be capable of sth *tə bi 'keɪpəb(ə)l (ə)v 'sʌmθɪŋ* | być zdolnym do czegoś

beyond | poza

to master sth | opanowywać coś

to despair *tə drɪ'speɪ* | rozpaczać

in practice | w praktyce

in principle | z zasady

fellow | *pot.* gość, koleś

Practice makes Perfect... Present Perfect

Choose the correct answer.

a. He has *put on/put on* a lot of weight over the last three months.

b. I *have never heard/never heard* anyone sing so well in my whole life.

c. I haven't talked to him since I *have left/left* Brighton.

d. Sheila *has seen/saw* him three times yesterday.

e. So far it's been so boring that we *have watched/watched* Dirty Dancing three times.

f. Mary Smith *has already been/was already* interviewed five times about her recent book.

g. Graham *has studied/studied* creative writing at the University of Oxford.

h. I *haven't seen/didn't see* this painting before.

i. I *have waited/waited* for you till 3 o'clock.

to put on weight | tyć
recent | tu: najnowszy

Answer key:
a. has put on; b. have never seen; c. left; d. saw; e. have
seen; f. has already been; g. studied; h. haven't
seen; i. waited



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