# ESOL E3 – Using Present Perfect for Experiences

# 1 of 17 - Introduction

In this unit, you will learn to talk about our general experiences in life using the present perfect tense.

By the end of this unit you will be able to:

* Form the present perfect tense
* Talk about your general experiences

# 2 of 17 – Examples of past simple

For verbs used for specific events that finished in the past, we make them into the past simple tense.

For example:

* ‘See’ becomes ‘saw’
* ‘Have’ or ‘has’ becomes ‘had’
* ‘Go’ becomes ‘went’
* ‘Buy’ becomes ‘bought’
* ‘Clean’ becomes ‘cleaned’

Note that:

* Regular verbs end in ‘**ed’** in the simple past tense.

# 3 of 17 – Examples of present perfect

The present perfect tense is formed using ‘have’ and the past participle. The present perfect tense is used to talk about general experiences.

In this unit, we will refer to the past participle as Verb 3.

The Verb 1 present tense word ‘see’ in the Verb 2 past simple tense, is ‘saw’, and in the Verb 3 past participle tense is ‘seen’.

The Verb 1 present tense word ‘have’ or ‘has’ in the Verb 2 past simple tense, is ‘had’, and in the Verb 3 past participle tense is ‘had’.

The Verb 1 present tense word ‘go’ in the Verb 2 past simple tense, is ‘went’, and in the Verb 3 past participle tense is ‘been’ or ‘gone’.

The Verb 1 present tense word ‘buy’ in the Verb 2 past simple tense, is ‘bought’, and in the Verb 3 past participle tense is ‘bought’.

The Verb 1 present tense word ‘clean’ in the Verb 2 past simple tense, is ‘cleaned’, and in the Verb 3 past participle tense is ‘cleaned’.

Note that regular verbs end in ‘ed’ for Verbs 2 and 3.

# 4 of 17 – Helping words

Verb 3 usually needs a helping word.

For perfect tenses, we use ‘have’.

To make the present perfect, we use ‘have’ and Verb 3. For example:

* For the present tense word ‘see’, add ‘have’ to the past simple verb form ‘seen’ to make the present perfect ‘have seen’.
* For the present tense words ‘have’ or ‘has’, add ‘have’ to the past simple verb form ‘had’ to make the present perfect ‘have had’.
* For the present tense word ‘go’, add ‘have’ to the past simple verb forms ‘been’ or ‘gone’ to make the present perfect ‘have been’ or ‘have gone’.
* For the present tense word ‘buy’, add ‘have’ to the past simple verb form ‘bought’ to make the present perfect ‘have bought’.
* For the present tense word ‘clean’, add ‘have’ to the past simple verb form ‘cleaned’ to make the present perfect ‘have cleaned’.

# 5 of 17 – Comparing the past simple and the present perfect

Let’s compare the past simple with the present perfect.

An example of past simple is: ‘This is my grandad. He died in 2003. My grandad went to France lots of times.’

‘Went’, is past simple.

An example of present perfect is: ‘This is my uncle - he’s still alive. My uncle has been to France lots of times.’ ‘My uncle’s been to France lots of times’ is the same as ‘My uncle has been to France lots of times.’

‘Has been’, is present perfect.

# 6 of 17 – Comparing finished and unfinished

Let’s compare finished with unfinished.

An example of finished is: ‘My grandad went to France lots of times.’

An example of unfinished is: ‘My uncle has been to France lots of times’ which is the same as ‘My uncle’s been to France lots of times.’

My grandad can never go back to France. My uncle can go back to France.

For my grandad, his experience of France is over. For my uncle, it is not.

# 7 of 17 – Question 1

Which of the following statements refer to my grandad (past simple), and which refer to my uncle (present perfect)?

1. He went to India many times.
2. He’s never been to India.
3. He has been to France.
4. He went to France on holiday once.

The correct answers are: a) and d) refer to my grandad and b) and c) refer to my uncle.

For my grandad’s life, we need to use past simple. For my uncle’s life, we need to use the present perfect.

# 8 of 17 – Question 2

Which of the following statements refer to my grandad (past simple), and which refer to my uncle (present perfect)?

1. He never went to Germany.
2. He’s never been to Germany.
3. He’s been to the USA.
4. He’d like to visit Australia one day.

The correct answers are: a) refers to my grandad and b), c) and d) refer to my uncle.

For my grandad’s life, we need to use past simple. For my uncle’s life, we need to use the present perfect.

# 9 of 17 – Question 3

Which of the following statements refer to my grandad (past simple), and which refer to my uncle (present perfect)?

1. He never went to the USA.
2. He has been to Italy.
3. He wanted to see Australia.
4. He went to Italy just before he died.

The correct answers are: a), c) and d) refer to my grandad and b) refers to my uncle.

For my grandad’s life, we need to use past simple. For my uncle’s life, we need to use the present perfect.

# 10 of 17 – Examples of using the present perfect to talk about our experiences

Imagine three characters in an airport departures lounge. A lone traveller, and a husband and wife travelling together. A conversation starts between them.

The lone traveller asks the couple “Where have you been?”

The wife responds, “London.”

The lone traveller says, “Nice place. Was it your first time in the UK?”

The wife responds, “No. We’ve been here many times. We’ve been to Oxford, and we’ve been to York... but the best place we’ve been to is Worcester.”

The lone traveller says, “I’ve never been there.”

The wife asks, “Have you ever been to Manchester?”

The lone traveller says, “Yes. I’ve been there lots of times. I’m a fan of Manchester United, so I’ve been to Old Trafford many times.”

The wife asks, “Where are you from?”

The lone traveller says, “I’m from France. Have you ever been there?”

The wife says, “Not yet. We went to Spain last year.”

The lone traveller asks, “Have you ever had French food?”

The wife says, “Yes. It’s delicious” although, her face does not look sincere.

Next we see the wife recalling in her mind, where the husband and wife had eaten French food, but the husband was very ill.

The wife continues to say, “We’ve eaten snails.”

The French man says, “My favourite!”

The wife says, “and we’ve eaten frogs’ legs.”

The French man says, “So you know that French food is the best in the world.”

The wife laughs.

The French man says, “There’s a French restaurant in the airport. Would you like to join me for a bite to eat?”

The wife says, “That’s very kind of you.”

There is an announcement over the airport tannoy stating, “Boarding for flight BA234 to New York.”

The wife says. “Oh, listen Harry. It’s our flight. What a shame we have to go.”

Let’s consider parts of their conversation talking about their experiences.

When the wife said, “We’ve been to Oxford” the ‘‘ve’ is short for ‘have’ and

‘been’ is verb 3. Together this makes the present perfect form.

When did they go to Oxford? They don’t say when. It’s a general experience.

When the wife asked, “Have you ever been to Manchester?”

The word ‘have’ is added to ‘been’ which is verb 3 to make the present perfect form. ‘Ever’ means ‘in your life’.

When the lone traveller asked, “Have you ever had French food?”

The word ‘have’ is added to ‘had’ verb 3 to make the present perfect form.

The wife said, “We have never been to France.”

The word ‘have’ was added to ‘been’ verb 3 to make the present perfect form. ‘Never’ means ‘not in your life’.

The wife also said, “We went to Spain last year.”

The word ‘went’ (verb 2 – the past simple tense) was used, because we know when they went. It’s a specific time in the past.

For general experiences, use present perfect, which is ‘have’ and verb 3. For example, “We’ve been to Oxford.”

And for specific past times, use past simple, which is verb 2. For example, “We went to Spain last year.”

# 11 of 17 – Using past time expressions

Notice that earlier in this module, we didn't give a past time for my uncle's experiences.

If we use a past time expression, for example, last year, then we need to use the past simple.

For example, to add a past time expression such as last year to, ”He has been to Italy”, use the past simple form, “He went to Italy” and add the past time expression, to make, “He went to Italy last year.”

Let's review another example.  
To add a past time expression such as a date to: “He's been to the USA”, use the past simple form, “He went to the USA” and add the past time expression, “He went to the USA in 2016.”

# 12 of 17 – Question 4

Choose the best response to the question: Have you ever been to Scotland?

1. Yes. I have been there last year.
2. Yes. I went there last year.

The answer is: b). ‘Last year’ is a past time, so we use the past simple.

# 13 of 17 – Question 5

Choose the best response to the question: Have you ever been to Scotland?

1. No, I haven’t.
2. No, I didn’t

The answer is: a). It’s a general experience, so we use the present perfect.

# 14 of 17 – Question 6

Choose the best response to the question: Have you ever cooked a meal for more than 10 people?

1. Yes, I cooked a big meal for my son’s birthday.
2. Yes, I’ve cooked a big meal for my son’s birthday.

The answer is: b). It’s a general experience, so we use the present perfect.

# 15 of 17 – Question 7

Choose the best response to the question: Have you ever bought something and regretted it?

1. Yes, in 2018 I’ve bought a bike, but I’ve never used it.
2. Yes, in 2018 I bought a bike, but I’ve never used it.

The answer is: b). ‘2018’ is a past time, so we need to use the past simple ‘I bought’. In the second half of the sentence, we use ‘I’ve never used it’ (the present perfect) because we still have the bike. If we didn’t have the bike any longer, we would say, ‘but I’ve never used it’.

# 16 of 17 – Interactive task

Please download the associated PDF and complete the tasks.

This is designed to test your reading skills from this session.

There are 3 tasks for you to complete. Task 3 is a challenge.

# 17 of 17 – Session conclusion

Well done, you have completed this session on using the present perfect tense when talking about experiences.

You should now be able to:

* Form the present perfect tense
* Talk about your general experiences

If you have any questions about anything covered in this session, please speak to your tutor for more help.