

present perfect and past: time words

To talk about **finished actions**, we can use the **present perfect** or the **simple past**. It often depends on the **kind of time expression** that is used. We do **not** normally use the **present perfect** with expressions which refer to a **finished time**, like *yesterday, last week, three years ago, then, when*. We normally use the **present perfect** with expressions which refer to '**any time up to now**', like *ever, never, before, recently, often, already, yet*.

Compare:

*I saw Kate **yesterday**.* (NOT ~~*I have seen Kate yesterday.*~~)
*Have you **seen** Rob **recently**?*
*You **were** here **last week**, weren't you?*
*You've **been** here **before**, haven't you?*
*She **studied** Chinese **when she was at university**.*
*He's **never studied** any foreign languages.*

1 Finished or unfinished time? Put the expressions in two lists.

a long time ago	before I was born	in 1991	in my life
just after I got up	last year	lately	this year
when I was nine			today

2 Choose the correct tense.

- I (*haven't seen / didn't see*) much of Al lately.
- 'Who is she?' 'I (*'ve never seen / never saw*) her before.'
- I (*'ve done / did*) a lot of stupid things in my life.
- She (*has left / left*) school last year.
- When (*have you got / did you get*) married?
- I'm sorry. I (*haven't finished / didn't finish*) yet.
- I (*'ve often wondered / often wondered*) what he does for a living.
- He (*has caught / caught*) the plane at eight this morning.
- I (*'ve read / read*) a lot of her books when I was at school.
- (*Have you seen / Did you see*) any good films recently?

Just now (meaning 'a moment ago') is used with the **simple past**.

Compare:

*She **has just phoned**.* *She **phoned just now**.*

We can **think of a finished time** even without using a time expression.
We can **think of 'any time up to now'** even if we don't say so.

Did you see 'Hamlet'? (It was on TV **last night**.)

Have you seen 'Hamlet'? (= *Have you ever seen 'Hamlet'?*)

3 Put in the most suitable tense (simple past or present perfect).

- 1 You (*be*) a beautiful baby.
- 2 I (*not read*) her latest book.
- 3 (*you visit*) India?
- 4 My great-grandmother (*live*) in Glasgow.
- 5 Columbus (*not discover*) America: the Indians already (*know*) where it was.
- 6 Amazing news! Scientists (*discover*) a new planet!
- 7 Who (*give*) Shakespeare his first job?
- 8 How many times (*you be*) in love?
- 9 I (*never enjoy*) a holiday as much as this one.
- 10 '(*you hear*) the thunder?' 'No, nothing wakes me up.'

4 Complete the three questions in your own words. If you can, ask somebody else and report the answers.

Have you ever ...?

How often have you ...?

When did you last ...?

5 Complete the cartoon captions correctly.

'Oh yes! I *met* / *'ve met* your sort before.'



'When did you last *feed* / *have you last fed* that goldfish?'

