

Present perfect and past 1 (I have done and I did)

A Study this example situation:



Tom is looking for his key. He can't find it.
He **has lost** his key. (*present perfect*)
This means that he doesn't have his key *now*.

Ten minutes later:



Now Tom **has found** his key. He has it now.
Has he **lost** his key? No, he **has found** it.
Did he **lose** his key? Yes, he **did**.
He **lost** his key (*past simple*)
but now he **has found** it. (*present perfect*)

The present perfect (something **has happened**) is a *present* tense. It always tells us about the situation *now*. 'Tom **has lost** his key' = he doesn't have his key *now* (see Unit 7).

The past simple (something **happened**) tells us only about the *past*. If somebody says 'Tom **lost** his key', this doesn't tell us whether he has the key now or not. It tells us only that he lost his key at some time in the past.

Do *not* use the present perfect if the situation now is different. Compare:

- They've **gone** away. They'll be back on Friday. (they are away *now*)
They **went** away, but I think they're back at home now. (*not* They've gone)
- It **has stopped** raining now, so we don't need the umbrella. (it isn't raining *now*)
It **stopped** raining for a while, but now it's raining again. (*not* It has stopped)

B

You can use the present perfect for new or recent happenings:

- 'I've **repaired** the TV. It's working OK now.' 'Oh, that's good.'
- Have you heard the news? Sally **has won** the lottery!

Use the past simple (*not* the present perfect) for things that are not recent or new:

- Mozart **was** a composer. He **wrote** more than 600 pieces of music.
(*not* has been ... has written)
- My mother **grew** up in Scotland. (*not* has grown)

Compare:

- Did you know that somebody **has invented** a new type of washing machine?
- Who **invented** the telephone? (*not* has invented)

C

We use the present perfect to give new information (see Unit 7). But if we continue to talk about it, we normally use the past simple:

- A: Ow! I've **burnt** myself.
B: How **did** you do that? (*not* have you done)
A: I **picked** up a hot dish. (*not* have picked)
- A: Look! Somebody **has spilt** something on the sofa.
B: Well, it wasn't me. I **didn't** do it. (*not* hasn't been ... haven't done)

Past simple → Unit 5 Present perfect → Units 7–8 Present perfect and past 2 → Unit 14
American English → Appendix 7