

## *Past Verb Tenses in English - contrasted*

### 1. Use

<b>Simple Past</b>	<b>Past Continuous</b>	<b>Past Perfect</b>	<b>Past Perfect Continuous</b>	<b>Present Perfect**</b>	<b>Present Perfect Continuous**</b>
action finished in the past	action was in progress at special time in the past	the past equivalent of Present Perfect	how long something had been happening before something else happened	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• result of an action in the past is important in the present</li> <li>• recently completed action</li> <li>• state beginning in the past and still continuing</li> </ul>	action beginning in the past and still continuing (focus is on the action)

### 2. Signal words

<b>Simple Past</b>	<b>Past Continuous</b>	<b>Past Perfect</b>	<b>Past Perfect Continuous</b>	<b>Present Perfect**</b>	<b>Present Perfect Continuous**</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• last ...</li> <li>• ... ago</li> <li>• in 2010</li> <li>• yesterday</li> </ul>	while	no unambiguous ones		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• just</li> <li>• yet</li> <li>• never</li> <li>• ever</li> <li>• already</li> <li>• so far</li> <li>• up to now</li> <li>• since</li> <li>• for</li> <li>• recently</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• all day</li> <li>• the whole day</li> <li>• how long</li> <li>• since</li> <li>• for</li> </ul>

### 3. Form

Simple Past	Past Continuous	Past Perfect	Past Perfect Continuous	Present Perfect**	Present Perfect Continuous**
Regular: V <sub>1</sub> + ed irregular: V <sub>2</sub> <i>2nd column of the irregular verbs</i>	Was/were + V <sub>1</sub> + ing	had + past participle*	had + been + V <sub>1</sub> + ing	have/has + past participle*	have/has + been + V <sub>1</sub> + -ing

\* past participle:

- regular verbs → V<sub>1</sub> + -ed
- irregular verbs → 3rd column of the table of the **irregular verbs**

### 4. Examples

#### 4.1. Affirmative sentences

Simple Past	Past Continuous	Past Perfect	Past Perfect Continuous	Present Perfect**	Present Perfect Continuous**
We <b>were</b> in the USA and <b>visited</b> Alaska last year.	Joe <b>was writing</b> an e-mail at 5 o'clock yesterday evening.	She <b>had read</b> a comic before she <b>went</b> to bed.	She <b>had been waiting</b> for Jack for 30 minutes when he <b>arrived</b> .	He <b>has lived</b> in Melbourne since 2010.	They <b>have been waiting</b> for him for two hours.

#### 4.2. Negative sentences

Simple Past	Past Continuous	Past Perfect	Past Perfect Continuous	Present Perfect**	Present Perfect Continuous**
We <b>were not</b> in the USA and <b>did not visit</b> Alaska last year.	Joe <b>was not writing</b> an e-mail at 5 o'clock yesterday evening.	She <b>had not read</b> a comic before she went to bed.	She <b>had not been waiting</b> for Jack for 30 minutes when he <b>arrived</b> .	He <b>has not lived</b> in Melbourne since 2010.	They <b>have not been waiting</b> for him for two hours.

#### 4.3. Questions

Simple Past	Past Continuous	Past Perfect	Past Perfect Continuous	Present Perfect**	Present Perfect Continuous**
<b>Were</b> you in the USA and <b>did</b> you <b>visit</b> Alaska last year?	<b>Was</b> Joe <b>writing</b> an e-mail at 5 o'clock yesterday evening?	<b>Had</b> she <b>read</b> a comic before she <b>went</b> to bed?	<b>Had</b> she <b>been waiting</b> for Jack for 30 minutes when he <b>arrived</b> ?	<b>Has</b> he <b>lived</b> in Melbourne since 2010?	<b>Have</b> they <b>been waiting</b> for him for two hours?

\*\* Both the **Present Perfect** and the **Present Perfect Continuous** are Present Tenses. But they also refer to the Past. That is the reason why they are listed here.

## *Practice*

### *Past Simple and Past Continuous*

**A: Put one of these verbs in each sentence. Use the *Past Simple*:**

eat      bring      write      buy      see      meet

1. The party was fantastic. Every guest \_\_\_\_\_ something to eat and a bottle of wine.
2. I had an extravagant weekend. I \_\_\_\_\_ some clothes and a plant.
3. Three weeks ago Tracy \_\_\_\_\_ her ex-husband in Mallorca. What a coincidence!
4. When I lived in Italy, we always \_\_\_\_\_ lamb at Easter.
5. Shakespeare \_\_\_\_\_ a lot of plays.

**B: A friend has just returned from his holiday. Ask him questions about it using the *Past Simple*.**

**Example: where/go? Where *did* you go?**

**sun/shine *Did* the sun *shine*?**

- |                                |                                     |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. how /get there?             | 6. what/do during the day?          |
| 2. who/go with?                | 7. go out in the evenings?          |
| 3. where/stay?                 | 8. buy any souvenirs?               |
| 4. the weather /good?          | 9. make any new friends?            |
| 5. what/you think of the food? | 10. how long/the journey home/take? |

**C: Put the verb in the *Past Simple*.**

1. Tom \_\_\_\_\_ (not/come) to the office yesterday because he \_\_\_\_\_ (be) ill.
2. She \_\_\_\_\_ (not/read) the book because she \_\_\_\_\_ (not/be) very interested in that author.
3. The students \_\_\_\_\_ (not/finish) their group project because they \_\_\_\_\_ (run out) of time.
4. We \_\_\_\_\_ (not/eat) anything for breakfast because we \_\_\_\_\_ (be) in a hurry.
5. Mary \_\_\_\_\_ (not/catch) the train to Mexico City because she \_\_\_\_\_ (arrive) at the station too late.

**D: Put the verb in the correct form: *Past Simple* or *Past Continuous*.**

1. I \_\_\_\_\_ (dream) when the alarm clock \_\_\_\_\_ (go off).
2. They \_\_\_\_\_ (wait) for me when I \_\_\_\_\_ (arrive).
3. The phone \_\_\_\_\_ (ring) while I \_\_\_\_\_ (have) a shower.
4. We \_\_\_\_\_ (not/go out) last Sunday because it \_\_\_\_\_ (rain).
5. I \_\_\_\_\_ (see) Kim at the party. She \_\_\_\_\_ (wear) a new dress.
6. I \_\_\_\_\_ (break) a bowl this morning. When I \_\_\_\_\_ (wash) the dishes it just \_\_\_\_\_ (slip) out of my hand onto the floor!
7. When he \_\_\_\_\_ (carry) the table, he \_\_\_\_\_ (feel) a sharp pain in his back.
8. Sarah \_\_\_\_\_ (go) down the stairs when the lights \_\_\_\_\_ (go out).
9. We \_\_\_\_\_ (watch) TV when someone \_\_\_\_\_ (come) to the door and \_\_\_\_\_ (knock) very loudly.
10. What \_\_\_\_\_ (you/do) at this time yesterday? Oh, I \_\_\_\_\_ (prepare) the dinner.
11. I \_\_\_\_\_ (fall) asleep while I \_\_\_\_\_ (watch) television.
12. At 12:45 yesterday, Mr Alright \_\_\_\_\_ (see) a client in his office.

*Present Perfect*

**A: Here is the latest news about your friends and family. Complete the sentences using the present *Perfect Simple*.**

**Example: I/buy/a new car.**

***I have bought a new car***

1. Mary/move house .....

2. Fred and Frank/start/a company .....
3. My parents/go to Greece .....
4. Sue/get married.....
5. Granny/celebrate her 80th birthday.....

**B: Read the situations and write sentences in the *Present Perfect Simple*. Choose one of the following:**

**learn          buy          find          break          clean          grow**

1. James can't go to school because his arm is in plaster. **He *has broken* his arm.**
2. Fred was nervous about travelling to France. He isn't any more because he knows he can communicate. He has .....
3. Jane didn't have a dress to wear to the wedding. Now she does .....
4. Our flat was very dusty. It isn't any more. ....
5. Mr Flint was unhappy because he had lost his cat. Now he is happy. ....
6. Harry didn't have a beard last month. Now he has a beard.....

**C: You are interviewing a famous person. Ask questions about things he/she has done in his/her life. Make the questions from the words given.**

1. ever/win/an award ***Have you ever won an award?***
2. ever/travel/to Hollywood .....
3. ever/meet/Bill Clinton .....
4. ever/write/a novel .....
5. ever/run/a marathon .....
6. ever/give/money to charity .....

**D: Complete the sentences using the present perfect simple and today/this week/this year etc.**

1. I watched TV yesterday but **I *haven't watched* TV today.**
2. It rained last week but .....
3. Last week I spent a lot of money but .....
4. I saw James yesterday but .....
5. I received a lot of post last month but .....
6. It was warm last spring but .....

**E: Write a sentence using the *Present Perfect Continuous*. Use the words in brackets.**

1. John is sunburnt. **He *has been sitting in the sun*.** (sit/in the sun)
2. The ground is wet. (rain)
3. Jack has no money left. (shop)
4. Fred is covered in paint. (paint/the kitchen)
5. Maisy is tired and irritable (drive/for 4 hours)
6. Harry is very hot and dirty (dig/the garden)

**F: Complete the sentences using the *Present Perfect Continuous* and add *since* or *for*.**

1. Maria \_\_\_\_\_ (learn) English \_\_\_\_\_ two years.
2. I \_\_\_\_\_ (write) letters \_\_\_\_\_ 8:00.
3. Robert and Jane \_\_\_\_\_ (travel) around Europe \_\_\_\_\_ five weeks.
4. We \_\_\_\_\_ (go) to Ireland for our holidays \_\_\_\_\_ 1968.
5. It \_\_\_\_\_ (rain) \_\_\_\_\_ this morning.
6. Anne \_\_\_\_\_ (look) for a new job \_\_\_\_\_ a long time.
7. Mark \_\_\_\_\_ (sell) computers \_\_\_\_\_ he started his job with Olivetti.
8. We \_\_\_\_\_ (wait) for the bus \_\_\_\_\_ twenty-five minutes.
9. She \_\_\_\_\_ (play) piano \_\_\_\_\_ she was eight.
10. They \_\_\_\_\_ (watch) TV \_\_\_\_\_ hours.

**G: Complete the sentences using present perfect simple or continuous.**

1. (build) The Browns \_\_\_\_\_ a house for some time.  
They \_\_\_\_\_ all the main walls now.
2. (write) John \_\_\_\_\_ his novel since last year. He \_\_\_\_\_ the first three chapters.
3. (paint) The painters \_\_\_\_\_ the town hall since February.  
They \_\_\_\_\_ nearly half of it now.
4. (save) The Cooks \_\_\_\_\_ to go on holiday next summer.  
They \_\_\_\_\_ € 2000 up to now.
5. (watch) I \_\_\_\_\_ cartoons on TV.  
I \_\_\_\_\_ 4 cartoons already.

**H: Put the verb in the most suitable form, *Present Perfect Simple* or *Continuous*.**

1. You look tired. \_\_\_\_\_ (you/study) hard?
2. Mr Brown is new here, isn't he? How long \_\_\_\_\_ (he/work) for the

company?

3. I \_\_\_\_\_ (lose) my wallet. Have you seen it anywhere?
4. I \_\_\_\_\_ (read) the magazine you lent me, but I \_\_\_\_\_ (not/finish) yet.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ (you/hear) the bad news? Simon \_\_\_\_\_ (break) his leg!
6. How many articles \_\_\_\_\_ (you/write)?
7. What \_\_\_\_\_ (you/do)? I \_\_\_\_\_ (wait) for you for an hour!
8. Bob and his friends \_\_\_\_\_ (play) golf since this morning.
9. I \_\_\_\_\_ (know) Louise for ten years.
10. Mr Brown \_\_\_\_\_ (mark) the exams all morning, but he \_\_\_\_\_ (not/read) them all.

**I: Put in the correct verb form: *Present Perfect* or *Past Simple*.**

1. How long \_\_\_\_\_ (she/study) German?
2. When \_\_\_\_\_ (he/begin) to study Business Administration?
3. Who \_\_\_\_\_ ( write ) the play Dancing at Lughnasa.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ (you/visit) any museums when you were in Sofia.
5. Henry has a perfect school record. He \_\_\_\_\_ (not/be) sick this year.
6. Prices \_\_\_\_\_ (go) up. Things are much more expensive this week.
7. What \_\_\_\_\_ (happen) to you. I waited all afternoon for you.
8. Marilyn \_\_\_\_\_ (have) an accident. She was running for the bus when she \_\_\_\_\_ (fall) down.
9. Mr Arnold \_\_\_\_\_ (win) the Exporter of the Year prize twice. His brother \_\_\_\_\_ (win) it four times already.
10. Alfred Hitchcock \_\_\_\_\_ (make) lots of films in his long career.
11. I \_\_\_\_\_ (just/remember) something.
12. \_\_\_\_\_ (you/reply) to Mr Aston's letter yet?
13. Mr Miller \_\_\_\_\_ (work) in a travel agency for years. Then he gave it up.
14. Melanie lives in Bucharest. She \_\_\_\_\_ (live) there all her life.
15. My uncle died in 1960. I \_\_\_\_\_ (never/have) the opportunity to meet him.

*Past Perfect*

**A: Read the situations and write sentences in the *Past Perfect* using the words in brackets.**

1. I arrived at the party at 9 p.m. but Jane was already there.

(she / arrive / before / me)

**She had arrived before me.**

2. I invited Jeff to come for lunch but he wasn't hungry.

(he / already / eat / lunch)

3. Jane was late for her exam. All the other students were already there.

(they / start / the exam)

4. Mike got home after midnight. The house was quiet.

(everybody / go / to bed)

5. I rang Fred but he wasn't at home.

(he / already / leave / for work)

**B: Complete the sentences using the *Past Simple* or the *Past Perfect*.**

1. When the teacher came in, everybody \_\_\_\_\_ (stand up).

2. I arrived two hours late because my car \_\_\_\_\_ (break down).

3. I was really tired last night. I \_\_\_\_\_ (have) a hard day.

4. Sam felt ill, so he \_\_\_\_\_ (go) to bed.

5. When we \_\_\_\_\_ (write) the letter, we went to the post office.

**C: Complete the sentences using the *Past Perfect* or the *Past Perfect Continuous*.**

1. By the time I got home they \_\_\_\_\_ (eat) all the cake.

2. The room was very smoky. I could tell that my brother \_\_\_\_\_ (smoke) in there all afternoon.

3. She retired at fifty-five, but she \_\_\_\_\_ (work) hard all her life.

4. James was very irritable. He \_\_\_\_\_ (look) for his contact lens for an hour and he still \_\_\_\_\_ (not / find) it!

5. I was furious with Tom when he arrived. I \_\_\_\_\_ (wait) for him for hours.

6. Harry was sad to sell his car. He \_\_\_\_\_ (have) it for a long time.

7. Mary was covered in white paint. She \_\_\_\_\_ (decorate) the kitchen all afternoon.

8. Lucy went into the sitting room. The TV was on. Her brother \_\_\_\_\_ (watch) it and \_\_\_\_\_ (forget) to switch it off.

9. Hattie felt terribly sick. She \_\_\_\_\_ (eat) too many cream cakes.

10. The journey was incredibly long. We \_\_\_\_\_ (travel) for ten hours and we weren't even half way yet.