

## Past simple vs present perfect

### Use

We use both these tenses to describe actions that started or ended in the past. Which tense we select depends on whether:

**a** we're referring to a definite or indefinite time.

**b** the action is finished or unfinished.

We often use time expressions like *recently*, *already*, *yet*, *since*, *ever*, *never* and *just* with the present perfect.

We often use time expressions like *yesterday*, *ago*, *last night/week/month*, etc. with the past tense.

Indefinite time	Definite time
<b>Have you seen John recently?</b> We've <b>already met</b> .	<b>Did you see John yesterday?</b> We <b>met when we were at university</b> .
<b>Has the meeting finished yet?</b> We <b>haven't spoken since</b> Friday.	The meeting <b>finished an hour ago</b> .
<b>Have you ever been</b> to Tokyo?	We <b>saw each other last Friday</b> .
<b>I've never been</b> to Greece.	I <b>visited</b> the Tokyo office <b>in 2008</b> .
The show <b>has just started</b> .	We <b>didn't visit</b> Athens <b>last year</b> .
	The show <b>started at 7:30</b> .

Unfinished actions	Finished actions
She's <b>worked</b> here <b>since</b> 2008. (She still works here.) I've <b>had</b> this cell phone <b>for three months</b> . (I still have it.)	She <b>worked</b> here <b>in 2008</b> . I <b>had</b> the phone <b>for three months</b> but then I lost it. (I don't have it any more.)



British speakers use the present perfect slightly more in conversation than American speakers. American speakers sometimes use a past tense where only a present perfect is possible in British English.

British and American speakers both use *yet*, *already* and *just* with the present perfect.

**Have you done it yet?**

I've **already done** it.

I've **just finished**. (BrE and AmE)

American speakers might also use a past tense with *yet* and *already*.

**Did you do it yet?**

I **already did** it. (AmE)

British and American speakers both use *just* with the past tense to describe something that happened a moment ago.

**Did you just call me?**

British speakers generally use *just* with the present perfect to give news.

I've **just passed** my driving test!

American speakers might say this, too, but they also use the past tense to give news.

I **just passed** my driving test.

## Past continuous

### Use

We use the past continuous to talk about the background situation in a story.

We **were living** in Paris at the time.

It **was raining** so I offered him a lift.

They **were working** on the top floor when the fire alarm went off.

### Form

<b>Affirmative sentences</b> Use <i>was/were</i> + the <i>-ing</i> form of the verb.	He <b>was studying</b> . We <b>were wearing</b> security badges.
<b>Negative sentences</b> Use <i>wasn't</i> ( <i>was not</i> ) and <i>weren't</i> ( <i>were not</i> ).	He <b>wasn't studying</b> . They <b>weren't wearing</b> security badges.
<b>Questions</b> Change the word order.	<b>Was he studying?</b> <b>What were you doing?</b>
<b>Short answers</b> Use <i>was/were</i> or <i>wasn't/weren't</i> .	Was he studying? <b>Yes, he was</b> . Were they wearing security badges? <b>No, they weren't</b> .