

Present perfect

English A2

What this topic teaches

The **present perfect** is the tense of the open door: a past event with a connection to now. The form is **have/has + past participle** : *I have eaten. She has gone.*

- Past simple = closed door: *I ate breakfast at seven.* (Finished. Time named. Done.)
- Present perfect = open door: *I have eaten breakfast.* (So I am not hungry **now**.)
- Chinese marks this idea with for experience: – *I have eaten hotpot* (at some point in my life; the experience is mine now).
- Memory hook: the past simple tells a story; the present perfect leaves a footprint. The story is over; the footprint is still here.

The forms: have plus the participle

Person	Form	Example
I / you / we / they	have + participle	I have finished.
he / she / it	has + participle	She has finished.

- Regular verbs: the participle is the same as the past: *work* → *worked* → *worked*. *I have worked.*
- Irregular verbs often have a third shape: *go* → *went* → ***gone***, *eat* → *ate* → ***eaten***, *see* → *saw* → ***seen***, *take* → *took* → ***taken***, *be* → *was* → ***been***. The rebel list grows a third column; ten a week still empties it.
- △ Third person: *has*. The ego letter's cousin: *She has eaten*. Even in the perfect, *he* gets special treatment.

The experience words: ever, never, just, already, yet

Word	Where it sits	Example
ever	questions, before the participle	Have you ever eaten hotpot?
never	before the participle	I have never seen snow.
just	before the participle	She has just left. (a minute ago)
already	before the participle	We have already eaten.
yet	negatives/questions, at the end	I haven't finished yet .

- *yet* sits at the end of the sentence like a cat waiting at the door: *Have you finished yet?*
- *never* is already negative, so no *haven't never*. One wall per sentence, as always.

The great collision: perfect or simple

Present perfect (open door)	Past simple (closed door)
I have eaten breakfast. (so: not hungry now)	I ate breakfast at seven. (finished time)
I have seen that film. (sometime in life)	I saw it last week. (named time)
She has lived here for ten years. (still here)	She lived here for ten years. (moved away)
today, this week, ever, never, since, for	yesterday, last week, in 2019, ago

- $\triangle$ The killer rule: **a finished time expression kills the perfect**. “*I have seen it yesterday*” $\times$. *Yesterday* closes the door, so: *I **saw** it yesterday*. English makes you choose: open door or named time, never both.
- *for* + a length (*for ten years*), *since* + a starting point (*since 2015*). *Since* is a start line, *for* is a tape measure.

Watch out: traps for Chinese speakers

- $\triangle$ **Don’t add a finished time**. translates beautifully – but only into the past simple: *I saw it yesterday*. The moment *yesterday* appears, the perfect is illegal.
- $\triangle$ **been or gone?** *She has **gone** to Beijing* = she is there now, not here. *She has **been** to Beijing* = she went and came back; the trip is an experience. One letter changes where she is standing.
- $\triangle$ **It’s not “recent past” by itself**. *just* makes it recent: *I have just eaten*. Without *just*, *I have eaten* simply means “not hungry now”. The connection to now is in the meaning, not the clock.
- $\triangle$ **The participle needs *have***. “*I eaten breakfast*” drops the helper. The perfect is always two words: *have* plus participle.

Say it aloud

The show-off game: true experiences only.

- I have eaten hotpot. I have never seen snow. I have already finished my homework. (One of these may be a lie.)
- Have you ever been to Shanghai? – Yes, I have. / No, I haven’t. But I have seen photos.
- She has just texted me. The message says: have you finished yet?

Check yourself

Answer first, then read the explanation.

1. *I _____ (eat) breakfast, so I'm not hungry.* – **have eaten**. The footprint is still here: open door.
2. *I _____ (see) that film last week.* – **saw**. *Last week* names the time and kills the perfect.
3. *She has _____ to Beijing. She's still there.* – **gone**. Not back yet.
4. *Have you finished your homework _____?* – **yet**. The cat at the end of the sentence.
5. *Wǒ chī guo huǒguō.* – **I have eaten hotpot**. An experience, a footprint, an open door.