

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

A

Study this example situation:

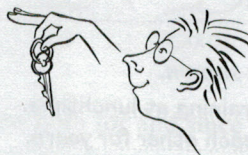


Tom is looking for his key. He can't find it.

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? (*present perfect*)

No, he **hasn't**. He **has found** it.

**Did he lose** his key? (*past simple*)

Yes, he **did**.

He **lost** his key (*past simple*)

but now he **has found** it. (*present perfect*)

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

The *past simple* tells us only about the *past*. If somebody says 'Tom **lost** his key', we don't know whether he has it now or not. We only know that he lost it at some time in the past.

Two more examples:

- Jack **grew** a beard but now he **has shaved** it off. (so he doesn't have a beard *now*)
- They **went** out after lunch and they've just **come** back. (so they are back *now*)

B

Do *not* use the present perfect if there is no connection with the present (for example, things that happened a long time ago):

- The Chinese **invented** printing. (*not* 'have invented')
- How many plays **did** Shakespeare **write**? (*not* 'has Shakespeare written')
- Beethoven **was** a great composer. (*not* 'has been')

Compare:

- Shakespeare **wrote** many plays.
- My sister is a writer. She **has written** many books. (she *still* writes books)

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** milk on the carpet.  
B: Well, it **wasn't** me. I **didn't** do it. (*not* 'hasn't been...haven't done')
- A: I wonder who it **was** then. (*not* 'who it has been')

Past simple → UNIT 5

Present perfect → UNITS 7-8

Present perfect and past (2) → UNIT 14

American English → APPENDIX 7