

HOW LONG TO A POINT IN THE FUTURE

When we get married, I'll have known Robert for four years.

Use with: when + present simple, by the time + present simple, for + time.

FUTURE PERFECT SIMPLE

ACTION FINISHED BEFORE A POINT IN THE FUTURE

By ten o'clock, I will have finished my homework.

Use with: by three o'clock, by Friday, when + present simple, by the time + present simple.



When should I use the Future Perfect Simple?

1: We use the future perfect to say 'how long' for an action that starts before and continues up to another action or time in the future. Usually we need 'for'. We can also use the future perfect continuous here so we often use the future perfect simple with stative verbs. If we use 'when', we usually need the present simple.

- When we get married, I'll have known Robert for four years.
- At 4 o'clock, I'll have been in this office for 24 hours.

Sometimes we could also use the present perfect in the same situation. But we like to use the future perfect to make the time an easy number.

- I've lived here for 11 months and three weeks. (This is correct, but the time is not an easy number.)
- On Tuesday, I will have lived here for one year. (A much easier number.)

2: We use the future perfect with a future time word, (and often with 'by') to talk about an action that will finish before a certain time in the future, but we don't know exactly when.

- By 10 o'clock, I will have finished my homework. (= I will finish my homework some time before 10, but we don't know exactly when.)
- By the time I'm sixty, I will have retired. (= I will retire sometime before I'm sixty. Maybe when I'm fifty-nine, maybe when I'm fifty-two.)

UNFINISHED

HOW LONG

I've known Karen since 1994.
She's lived in London for three years.

Use with: since 2010, since July,
for ten years, for three days.

UNFINISHED TIME WORD

I haven't seen her this month.

Use with: this week, today, this
month, this year.

PRESENT RESULT

I've lost my keys (so I can't get into my
house).

NEWS / RECENT EVENTS

The Queen has given a speech.

Use with: just / yet / already / recently.

PRESENT PERFECT SIMPLE

FINISHED

LIFE EXPERIENCE

I've been to Tokyo.

Use with: ever, never.



When should we use the Present Perfect Simple?

Unfinished Actions

1: We use this tense when we want to talk about unfinished actions or states or habits that started in the past and continue to the present. Usually we use it to say 'how long' and we need 'since' or 'for'. We often use stative verbs.

- I've known Karen since 1994.
- She's lived in London for three years.
- I've worked here for six months.

'Since' and 'For'

We use 'since' with a fixed time in the past (2004, April 23rd, last year). The fixed time can be another action, which is in the past simple (since I was at school, since I arrived).

- I've known Sam since 1992.
- I've liked chocolate since I was a child.
- She's been here since 2pm.

We use 'for' with a period of time (2 hours, three years, six months).

- I've known Julie for ten years.
- I've been hungry for hours.
- She's had a cold for a week.

Finished Actions

2: Life experience. These are actions or events that happened sometime during a person's life. We don't say when the experience happened, and the person needs to be alive now. We often use the words 'ever' and 'never' here.

- I have been to Tokyo.
- They have visited Paris three times.
- We have never seen that film.

3: With an unfinished time word (this month, this week, today). The period of time is still continuing.

- I haven't seen her this month.
- She's drunk three cups of coffee today.
- I've already moved house twice this year!

We CAN'T use the present perfect with a finished time word.

- ~~I've seen him yesterday.~~

4: A finished action with a result in the present (focus on result). We often use the present perfect to talk about something that happened in the recent past, but that is still true or important now. Sometimes we can use the past simple here, especially in US English.

- I've lost my keys (so I can't get into my house).
- She's hurt her leg (so she can't play tennis today).
- They've missed the bus (so they will be late).

5: We can also use the present perfect to talk about something that happened recently, even if there isn't a clear result in the present. This is common when we want to introduce news and we often use the words 'just / yet / already / recently'. However, the past simple is also correct in these cases, especially in US English.

- The Queen has given a speech.
- I've just seen Lucy.
- The Mayor has announced a new plan for the railways.

Been and Gone

In this tense, we use both 'been' and 'gone' as the past participle of 'go', but in slightly different circumstances.

We use 'been' (often when we talk about life experience) to mean that the person we're talking about visited the place and came back.

- I've been to Paris (in my life, but now I'm in London, where I live).
- She has been to school today (but now she's back at home).
- They have never been to California.

We use 'gone' (often when we are talking about an action with a result in the present) to mean that the person went to the place and is at the place now.

- 'Where's John?' 'He's gone to the shops' (he's at the shops now).
- Julie has gone to Mexico (now she's in Mexico).
- They've gone to Japan for three weeks (now they're in Japan).

ACTION FINISHED BEFORE ANOTHER PAST ACTION

When we arrived, the film had started.

Use with: when + past simple, June, last Tuesday.

HOW LONG TO A POINT IN THE PAST

When he graduated, he had been in London for six years.

Use with: when + past simple, for + time.

PAST PERFECT

UNREAL THINGS IN THE PAST

I wish I hadn't gone to bed so late!

Use with: third conditionals, wish.



When should I use the Past Perfect Simple?

1: A finished action before a second point in the past.

- When we arrived, the film had started (= first the film started, then we arrived).

We usually use the past perfect to make it clear which action happened first. Maybe we are already talking about something in the past and we want to mention something else that is further back in time. This is often used to explain or give a reason for something in the past.

- I'd eaten dinner so I wasn't hungry.
- It had snowed in the night, so the bus didn't arrive.

If it's clear which action happened first (if we use the words 'before' or 'after', for example), the past perfect is optional.

- The film started before we arrived / the film had started before we arrived.

2: Something that started in the past and continued up to another action or time in the past.

The past perfect tells us 'how long', just like the present perfect, but this time the action continues up to a point in the past rather than the present. Usually we use 'for + time'. We can also use the past perfect continuous here, so we most often use the past perfect simple with stative verbs.

- When he graduated, he had been in London for six years. (= He arrived in London six years before he graduated and lived there until he graduated, or even longer.)
- On the 20th of July, I'd worked here for three months.

3: To talk about unreal or imaginary things in the past. In the same way that we use the past simple to talk about unreal or imaginary things in the present, we use the past perfect (one step back in time) to talk about unreal things in the past. This is common in the third conditional and after 'wish'.

- If I had known you were ill, I would have visited you.
- She would have passed the exam if she had studied harder.
- I wish I hadn't gone to bed so late!