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# BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

## The Grammar Gameshow

### Present perfect and past simple

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**Will**

Well, hello! And welcome to today's Grammar Gameshow! I'm your host, Will! No, seriously, look, I'm running out of these. You come up with one at home. And of course, let's not forget Leslie, our all-knowing voice in the sky.

**Leslie**

Hello, everyone!

**Will**

Tonight we're going to ask you three questions about...

**Leslie**

The present perfect simple and past simple tenses.

**Will**

OK! Now, let's meet our contestants!

**Didactica**

Hello. I'm Didactica

**Will**

And contestant number two?

**Didactica**

It's nice to meet you. I'm Pedantia.

**Will**

Now, correct me if I'm wrong, but you two are sisters, aren't you?

**Pedantia**

That's correct.

**Didactica**

And linguists.

**Both**

We do everything together.

**Will**

That was creepy! I guess it's a team game, then! Let's get going and don't forget you can play along at home too. Round one is a 'which tense' round. I'm going to show you some past simple sentences and you're going to decide if they should remain past simple or be changed into the present perfect. Here we go. I cut my finger.

**Didactica**

How badly?

**Will**

Does it matter?

**Pedantia**

Of course! The present perfect is all about the relevance...

**Didactica**

...or importance of something in the present...

**Pedantia**

...even if the action is past. If you cut your finger,

**Didactica**

...but it isn't important to you – maybe it doesn't hurt...

**Pedantia**

...or doesn't stop you using your hand,

**Didactica**

then it's past simple. But...

**Pedantia**

...if you cut your finger...

**Didactica**

...and you need to go to hospital,

**Pedantia**

...well, that's a relevant or significant present consequence...

**Didactica**

...of a past action, so then...

**Pedantia**

...it's a present perfect.

**Will**

Well?

**Didactica**

Which one?

**Pedantia**

You need to be...

**Didactica**

...specific.

**Will**

Oh, I don't know! You cut your finger at an artery, and a six-foot-high fountain of blood is spurting all over the ceiling!

**Pedantia**

Oh! A bit of a...

**Didactica**

...nip then. Probably...

**Pedantia**

...hospital. So,

**Didactica**

...present perfect. I've...

**Pedantia**

...cut my finger.

**Leslie**

Correct!

**Will**

The Olympic Games started.

**Didactica**

Is this being mentioned...

**Pedantia**

...for the first time?

**Will**

Er, yes.

**Didactica**

Then it's news.

**Pedantia**

So, the Olympic Games...

**Didactica**

...have started. Present perfect...

**Pedantia**

...to report...

**Didactica**

...news. Official, or...

**Pedantia**

...personal. You could also...

**Didactica**

...tell people that you've passed...

**Pedantia**

...your driving test if...

**Didactica**

...you want to give...

**Pedantia**

...them a lift for the first time...

**Didactica**

...or just want some attention!

**Leslie**

Correct!

**Will**

Last one, I lived in London for many years.

**Pedantia**

Are you...

**Didactica**

deceased?

**Will**

What? No!

**Pedantia**

Do you still...

**Didactica**

live in London?

**Will**

I guess so.

**Pedantia**

Then, I've lived in...

**Didactica**

London for many years.

**Pedantia**

Present perfect...

**Didactica**

...for a continuation or...

**Pedantia**

...repetition of something...

**Didactica**

...up to the present.

**Leslie**

Correct!

**Will**

You're giving me the willies. Leslie, comfort me!

**Leslie**

The difference between the present perfect simple and past simple is not always easy to understand. Much of it relies on context and what the speaker thinks is important or

relevant. The bottom line is, the present perfect is used when past actions or states are important or connected to the present in some way. This could be past actions with present consequences, announcing new information, or the continuation of something from the past to the present. Finally, after we have used the present perfect simple, we switch to the past simple to go into specific detail. Don't forget!

### **Will**

Well done, ladies. Have I I divided in half. That's one each! Round two. The present perfect is often associated with a number of adverbs. These adverbs spell out J.E.A.N.Y. I want to know what they are.

### **Pedantia**

Just.

### **Didactica**

Ever.

### **Pedantia**

Already or Always.

### **Didactica**

Never.

### **Pedantia**

Yet.

### **Didactica**

Correct!

### **Pedantia**

Although, the word genie...

### **Didactica**

...is spelt 'G E N...

### **Pedantia**

...I E' so it would have been...

### **Didactica**

...better to say...

### **Pedantia**

...spell a homophone...

**Didactica**

...of genie.

**Pedantia**

It's just a way of remembering.

**Didactica**

Accuracy...

**Pedantia**

...is important.

**Didactica**

And you forgot...

**Pedantia**

...for...

**Didactica**

...since...

**Pedantia**

...lately...

**Didactica**

...recently...

**Will**

Alright, yeah, we get it! You know, there's something very eerie about you two. Leslie!

**Leslie**

Scarily accurate! The present perfect is associated with a number of adverbs, many of which mean 'at some or any time up to now'. A useful way of remembering some of them is to use the mnemonic JEANY! Just, ever, already, never, yet! You could also say JEANYFSLR, with for, since, lately, and recently. But it doesn't have the same ring to it.

**Will**

Good work. On to our last round, thank goodness. Look at these sentences and tell me if the use of time in each is correct. Have you been to France?

**Didactica**

The sentence is...

**Pedantia**

...correct. In these contexts...

**Didactica**

...when time is not mentioned, the speaker...

**Pedantia**

...is usually thinking of a period of...

**Didactica**

...time up to now.

**Leslie**

Correct!

**Will**

I've last seen John yesterday.

**Pedantia**

Yesterday is...

**Didactica**

...finished time...

**Pedantia**

We don't use...

**Didactica**

...the present perfect ...

**Pedantia**

...with finished time...

**Didactica**

...except in exceptional circumstances.

**Pedantia**

I saw John...

**Didactica**

...yesterday.

**Leslie**

Correct!



**Will**

Right. Last one. Have you seen John this morning?

**Pedantia**

What time is it...

**Didactica**

...in this context?

**Will**

Does it matter?

**Pedantia**

Yes.

**Will**

OK. It's 11.30 am.

**Didactica**

Then the morning...

**Pedantia**

...is not over. It is...

**Didactica**

...still this morning...

**Pedantia**

...so we can use...

**Didactica**

...the present perfect.

**Will**

Well, what if it's 3pm?

**Didactica**

Then the morning...

**Pedantia**

...is finished and becomes...

**Didactica**

...finished time.

**Pedantia**

So sorry.

**Didactica**

Past simple.

**Leslie**

Correct!

**Will**

Make them stop Leslie.

**Leslie**

All the hairs on the back of my neck are standing up. The present perfect is often used without a time word. In these cases, the speaker is generally thinking of a time period meaning up to the present. We can also use the present perfect with time periods that are not finished. For example, saying 'I've had a nice day today,' at 8 o'clock at night. If the time word represents a finished time period though, we use the past simple.

**Will**

Good job, ladies. You certainly know your grammar. Have twelvty points.

**Pedantia**

That's not...

**Didactica**

...a real number.

**Will**

That is true! But I don't care! That was creepy. And accuracy is your speciality, so release the indescribable whatchamacallit. Freaky-deaky! I probably did the world a favour there. Saved some money on a prize too! And that brings us to the end of today's Grammar Gameshow. Thanks for joining us. Say goodbye, Leslie.

**Leslie**

Sampai jumpa, Leslie!

**Will**

See you next time.