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? No, he has found it.

Did he lose his key? Yes, he did.

He lost his key (*past simple*)

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

The *present perfect* (something has happened) is a present tense. It tells us about the situation now.

‘Tom has lost his key’ = he doesn’t have his key now (see Unit 7).

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

Compare present perfect and past simple:

- They’ve gone away. They’ll be back on Friday. (they are away now)
- They went away, but I think they’re back at home now. (*not* They’ve gone away)
- It has stopped raining now, so we don’t need the umbrella. (it isn’t raining now)
- It stopped raining for a while, but now it’s raining again. (*not* It has stopped)

B

You can use the present perfect for new or recent happenings:

- I’ve repaired the washing machine. It’s working OK now.
- ‘Hannah has had a baby! It’s a boy.’ ‘That’s great news.’

Usually, you can also use the past simple:

- I repaired the washing machine. It’s working OK now.

Use the past simple (*not* the present perfect) for things that are not recent or new:

- Mozart was a composer. He wrote more than 600 pieces of music. (*not has been … has written)*
- My mother grew up in Italy. (*not has grown)*

Compare:

- Somebody has invented a new type of washing machine.
- Who invented the telephone? (*not has invented)*

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 something on the sofa.
  B: Well, it wasn’t me. I didn’t do it. (*not hasn’t been … haven’t done*)
Exercises

13.1 Complete the sentences. Use the present perfect where possible. Otherwise use the past simple.

1. I can’t get in. I’ve lost my key.

2. The office is empty now. Everybody (go) home.

3. I meant to call you last night, but I (forget).

4. Helen goes to New York for a holiday, but she’s back home in London now.

5. Are you OK? Yes, I (have) a headache, but it’s OK now.

13.2 Are the underlined parts of these sentences OK? Correct them where necessary.

1. Did you hear about Sophie? She’s given up her job.
   OK My mother grew up

2. My mother has grown up in Italy.
   My mother grew up

3. How many plays has William Shakespeare written?

4. I’ve forgotten his name. Is it Joe or Jack?

5. Who has invented paper?

6. Drugs have become a big problem everywhere.

7. We’ve washed the car, but now it’s dirty again.

8. Where have you been born?

9. Ellie has gone shopping. She’ll be back in about an hour.

10. Albert Einstein has been the scientist who has developed the theory of relativity.

13.3 Put the verb into the correct form, present perfect or past simple.

1. It stopped raining for a while, but now it’s raining again. (it / stop)

2. The town where I live is very different now. It has changed a lot. (it / change)

3. I studied German at school, but most of it now. (I / forget)

4. The police three people, but later they let them go. (arrest)

5. What do you think of my English? Do you think ? (it / improve)

6. Are you ready to go? your coffee? (you / finish)

7. for a job as a tour guide, but I wasn’t successful. (I / apply)

8. Where’s my bike? outside the house, but it’s not there now. (it / be)

9. Quick! We need to call an ambulance. an accident. (there / be)

10. a: I’ve found my phone.
    b: Oh, good. Where it? (you / find)
    a: at the bottom of my bag. (It / be)

11. a: Ben won’t be able to play tennis for a while. his arm. (He / break)
    b: Oh. How ? (that / happen)
    a: off a ladder. (He / fall)