

Proofreading Skills Tutorial:

Tutorial #7:

Special Tenses

Reviewing the Simple Past Tense

Using the Present Perfect Tense

Using the Past Perfect Tense

Writing Center

English 800 Center

All notes and exercises can be done on separate sheets of paper, which you should bring to your conference with an instructor in the center.

As you work through the tutorial, make sure to see an instructional aide at the front desk in the Writing Center or English 800 Center if you have any questions or difficulties.

Special Tenses: Present Perfect and Past Perfect

This tutorial will demonstrate how to use different types of past-tense verbs correctly:

1. **the simple past**
2. **the present perfect**
3. **the past perfect.**

Part One: Reviewing the Simple Past Tense

All the verbs in the following sentences are underlined. Some are regular verbs, and others are irregular verbs. But all the verbs are written in simple past tense:

Yesterday I smiled at my boyfriend for the first time since our fight.

The cat licked its paws.

Tatiana had a good time at the party on Tuesday.

Liam was at work.

Susannah took her banjo to Louisiana in 1926.

You ran very quickly down the street.

Notice that some of the sentences specify when the verb (the action *or* the state of being or having) occurred. That is, the smiling at my boyfriend started and stopped yesterday. The having a good time at the party began and ended on Tuesday. And the taking of the banjo to Louisiana started and stopped in the year 1926.

But some of the sentences do not specify when the verb (the action or state of being or having) occurred. That is, these sentence don't tell us when the cat licked its paws, when Liam was at work or when you ran down the street.

Principle I: Even if the sentence does not say *when*, the simple past tense shows that an action (or a state of being or having) began and ended at a single, specific time in the past.

Now that it is clear that the simple past tense conveys that an action or state of being began and ended at a specific time in the past, let's discuss when to use another type of past-tense verb, the present perfect.

Part Two: Using the Present Perfect

The present perfect is formed by using *has or have* and the past participle of the verb.

Principle II. **The present perfect shows that an action began at a specific time in the past and continues in the present. The present perfect is sometimes called the “past to present” verb tense.**

Consider the following sentences:

The IRS **has tried** to collect Lupe and Bob’s taxes every year without success.

In addition to instilling the values of honesty and hard work in their son, Mama and Papa **have given** Tito much self-confidence and independence.

In the first sentence, the present perfect consists of “has” plus the past participle of the verb “try,” which is “tried.” The present perfect shows that the IRS began trying to collect Lupe and Bob’s taxes at a specific time in the past and that the agency is still trying to collect them in the present. In the second sentence, the present perfect consists of “have” plus the past participle of “give,” which is “given.” The present perfect shows that Mama and Papa began giving Tito self-confidence and independence at a specific time in the past and continue to give him these qualities now, in the present.

The following chart illustrates Principle II, specifically when to use the present perfect as opposed to the simple past.

Simple Past	Present Perfect
<p>I taught in 1987. (The simple past tense shows that I began and stopped teaching at a single, specified time in the past, 1987.)</p>	<p>I have taught since 1987. (The present perfect shows that I began teaching at a specific time in 1987 and am still teaching now, in the present.)</p>
<p>Fatima worked as a nurse. (The simple past tense shows that Fatima began and stopped working as a nurse at a single, specific time in the past.)</p>	<p>Fatima has worked as a nurse for a year. (The present perfect shows that Fatima began working as a nurse at a specific time one year ago, and she is still working as a nurse, in the present.)</p>
<p>Jim and Kate robbed the liquor store on Thursday. (The simple past tense shows that Jim and Kate began and finished robbing the liquor store at a single specific time in the past, on Thursday.)</p>	<p>Jim and Kate have robbed the liquor store every year. (The present perfect shows that Jim and Kate started robbing the liquor store at a specific time in the past and have not stopped robbing it; they will continue to rob the store this year.)</p>

Exercise 1

Instructions: Using Principles I and II, choose the correct tense: simple past or present perfect. If you are uncertain about the past participle of a verb, look up the verb in the dictionary. The first sentence has been done for you.

1. In 2010, some students (PROTEST) protested at the World Trade Organization meeting in Seattle, but since that time, many others (demonstrate) have demonstrated at other meetings held in cities all over the world.
(Some students began and finished protesting at the Seattle meeting in the past. But other students are still demonstrating in the present, at meetings held in other cities.)
2. Mario Vargas Llosa (WRITE) _____ about politics in Peru during the 1980s, but Gabriel Garcia Marquez (WRITE) _____ about politics in Colombia for a much longer time, beginning in the 1970s.
4. Since kindergarten, I (TAKE) _____ piano lessons.
5. During the 1980s, Congress (ATTEMPT) _____ to balance the budget.
6. Before the police arrested him on Thursday, Gilberto, a stockbroker, (DESTROY) _____ all of the evidence of illegal trading.
7. Every year since she was sixteen, the Jones family of Beverly Hills (GIVE) _____ a new car to their daughter Belinda for her birthday.

The present perfect is not only used to show that an action began at a specific time in the past and continues in the present. It has another function, as well.

Principle III: The present perfect can also show that an action began at an unspecified time in the past.

The following chart illustrates Principle III, specifically when to use the present perfect as opposed to the simple past.

Simple Past	Present Perfect
<p>Divine Grace <u>watched</u> the latest Harry Potter movie last week.</p> <p>(The simple past tense shows that Divine Grace began and finished watching the movie at a specific time in the past, that is, last week.)</p>	<p>Divine Grace <u>has watched</u> the latest Harry Potter movie.</p> <p>(The present perfect shows that Divine Grace has watched the movie at an unspecified time in the past.)</p>
<p>On Saturday night, the dog <u>howled</u> and <u>annoyed</u> the neighbors.</p> <p>(The simple present tense shows that the dog began and finished howling and annoying the neighbors at a specific time in the past, that is, on Saturday night.)</p>	<p>Hatty Finch, the dog, <u>has howled</u> often, and she <u>has annoyed</u> the neighbors many times.</p> <p>(The present perfect shows that the dog has howled and annoyed the neighbors at many unspecified times in the past.)</p>
<p>Greg <u>laughed</u> at the police officers.</p> <p>(The simple present tense shows that Greg began and finished laughing at the police officers at a single, specific time in the past.)</p>	<p>On several occasions, Greg <u>has laughed</u> at police officers.</p> <p>(The present perfect shows that Greg has laughed at police officers at several unspecified times in the past.)</p>

Exercise 2

Instructions: Using Principles I, II and III, choose either the simple past or the present perfect to complete the sentence. The first sentence has been done for you.

1. The San Francisco Giants almost (WIN) won the World Series in 2011.
2. Victor Chan (VISIT) _____ China several times.
3. Ricky (CRY) _____ a little when he saw his father eat the last of the pizza.
4. Since the invention of duct tape, American women (DISCOVER) _____ hundreds of ways to fix everyday objects.
5. Outsourcing, or the use of overseas labor by American companies, (CREATE) _____ a huge controversy among various political groups.
6. During the past several years, Oleg (DRIVE) _____ his 1983 Volvo 140,000 miles.
7. Michele (BELIEVE) _____ in Santa Claus until she was ten.

8. The author Jane Jacobs (WRITE)_____ several great books on city planning, and Jermaine (READ)_____ them all.

Exercise 3

Instructions: Using Principles I, II and III, change any incorrect verbs to simple past or present perfect. The first two sentences have been done for you.

As she grew up in the 1880s, Laura Ingalls Wilder ~~has~~ lived with her family first in a log cabin built deep in a Wisconsin forest and then in a sod hut carved out of a hill, which was part of the Nebraska prairie. In the 1950s she began to publish books about her childhood, and since

have inspired

that time, Wilder's books ~~inspired~~ many young readers, particularly imaginative girls. For many years, these readers learned a great deal about social history from Wilder's books. For example, Wilder described the way that her mother made soap, preserved fruits, and salted and dried meat. She also wrote about the evenings by the fire when her father played the fiddle, and her mother darned or knitted socks. Turning the pages of Wilder's books, generations of readers experienced many emotions, too. In one book, Wilder wrote about the bears and wolves that roamed outside the family dwelling, and in another book, she described the scarlet fever epidemic that caused her older sister, Mary, to become blind. While there was no medicine to prevent Mary's blindness, doctors now have antibiotics to treat scarlet fever. Since Wilder was a little girl, everything certainly changed.

Part Two: Using the Past Perfect

The past perfect is formed by using *had* and the past participle of the verb.

<p>Principle IV. The past perfect shows that an action (or a state of being or having) took place <u>before</u> the past tense of the sentence. The past perfect is sometimes called the “past <u>before</u> the past” verb tense.</p>

Consider the following sentences:

After he had reached the end of his patience, Yoshi yelled at the child.

In this sentence, the simple past tense (“yelled”) shows that Yoshi began and stopped yelling in the past. The past perfect tense (“had reached”) shows that Yoshi reached the end of his patience before he began yelling. The past perfect is the past before the past. That is, reaching the end of his patience occurred before the yelling took place.

All week, you had been too tired to party. But on Friday evening, you drank three double espressos, and soon you were ready for fun.

In this example, the simple past tense (“drank” and “were”) shows that you drank three double espressos and were ready for fun at a single, specific time in the past, that is, on Friday evening. The past perfect tense (“had been”) shows that you had been too tired to go to the party all week, before you drank the espressos and were ready for fun. That is, being too tired for the party occurred before drinking the espressos and being ready for fun.

The following chart illustrates Principle II, specifically when to use the past perfect as opposed to the simple past.

Simple Past	Past Perfect
<p>On our most recent hike, we <u>walked</u> all day to get to the top of Mount Diablo.</p> <p>(The simple past tense shows that we began and stopped walking at a specific time in the past, that is, on our last hike.)</p>	<p>On our most recent hike, we <u>reached</u> the top of the mountain after we <u>had walked</u> fifteen miles.</p> <p>(The past perfect is the past <i>before</i> the past. In this sentence, the past perfect shows that walking fifteen miles occurred <i>before</i> the past tense of reaching the top of the mountain.)</p>
<p>Marco <u>tried</u> to make an excuse to his mother for his late arrival on Thursday night.</p> <p>(The simple past tense shows that Marco began and stopped trying to make an excuse at a specific time in the past, that is, on Thursday night.)</p>	<p>Because his mother <u>had refused</u> to believe his excuses in the past, Marco <u>understood</u> that a punishment was inevitable when he came home so late on Thursday night.</p> <p>(The past perfect is the past <i>before</i> the past. In this sentence, the past perfect shows that his mother had repeatedly refused to believe him <i>before</i> Marco understood on Thursday night that he would be punished.)</p>
<p>Nick <u>delivered</u> his speech at the orientation for first-year students.</p> <p>(The simple past tense shows that Nick began and stopped delivering his speech at a specific time in the past—even though the sentence does not say when.)</p>	<p>Jane and Carrie <u>had left</u> before Nick <u>delivered</u> his speech at the orientation for first-year students.</p> <p>(The past perfect is the past <i>before</i> the past. In this sentence, the past perfect shows that Jane and Carrie had left <i>before</i> Nick delivered his speech.)</p>

Exercise 4

Instructions: Using Principles I and IV, write the verb in the correct tense: simple past or past perfect. If you are uncertain about the past participle of a verb, look up the verb in the dictionary. The first sentence has been done for you.

1. By the mid-eighteenth century, English (BECOME) had become one of the most widely spoken languages in the world.
2. The Golden State Warriors (LOST) _____ seven games in a row, but they (WIN) _____ last night.
3. Donny (EAT) _____ seven Big Macs and then (ATTEMPT) _____ to roller skate down the freeway.
4. Venus (CRY) _____ about the dent in her new car because she (DRIVE) _____ it only a few times.
5. The Puritans (ATTEMPT) _____ to escape religious persecution in several countries but finally (ARRIVE) _____ in the New World.
6. We (LAUGH) _____ at all the gross jokes in *The Hangover Part III* even though we (SEE) _____ the movie many times.
7. Most of the senior officers (SOLD) _____ all their stock by the time it suddenly (BECOME) _____ worthless.
8. Uncle Walter (WORK) _____ as a bellman for forty years until the hotel finally (PROMOTE) _____ him to be a doorman.

Exercise 5

Instructions: Read the following paragraph carefully, and using Principles I and IV, correct any verbs that are written in the wrong tense. If you are uncertain about the past participle of a verb, look up the verb in the dictionary. The first sentence has been done for you.

had wrecked

Before he graduated from high school, Juan ~~wrecked~~ two new cars.

He crashed the first car after his girlfriend Valentina ended their relationship because she fell in love with a handsome football player. Juan drove wildly through several stop signs and traffic lights until he realized that he rear-ended a parked police car. No one was hurt, and Juan managed to escape without losing his license. His second crash was even more dramatic than the first. Juan was happy with his second girlfriend, Mary Kate, until one day he saw her walking across campus with the same football player who stole Juan's first girlfriend. This time, with a smile on his face, Juan climbed into his new Audi and smashed into the football player's Hummer.

Exercise 6

Instructions:

1. Review an essay where your teacher has marked your verb tense errors. Be prepared to describe in your own words how to identify your verb tense errors in your own writing and how to revise them.
2. Look back at the principles and exercises in this tutorial and make notes on a separate sheet of paper. You will bring these notes and the essay to your conference.
3. Make an appointment for a conference with an instructor in the Writing Center (18-104) or English 800 Center (18-102). To make this appointment, stop by the Centers or call (650) 574-6436. During this appointment, the professor will make sure you understand

the concepts covered in this tutorial, answer any questions that you might have, review your answers to these exercises, and check to see if you can incorporate the skill into your writing.

Reminder:

For this appointment, bring

- any notes about the tutorial that you have taken
- your completed tutorial exercises
- and the essay