

ENGLISH 3AC · SEMESTER 2

Past simple or present perfect? English 3AC

Choose past simple or present perfect in English 3AC. Compare finished past times and experience, with timelines, clear examples and practice answers.

Key points

- Use past simple with a finished time: I visited it yesterday.
- Present perfect uses have or has + past participle.
- Ask about experience with Have you ever...?

Learning goals

- Describe a finished event at a stated past time.
- Ask about an experience without a finished time.
- Use a correct past participle after have or has.

When should you use the past simple?

Use the past simple for a finished event in a finished past time. I visited the museum yesterday tells us when the visit happened. Last week, in 2024 and two days ago are common finished-time expressions. Regular verbs often end in -ed; irregular verbs have special forms, such as went and saw.

A past-simple question uses did with a base verb: Did you visit the museum yesterday? A negative uses didn't: I didn't visit it. The verb be is different: Was the museum open? Keep the question structure as well as the time expression in mind.



Ask whether the visit is part of someone's experience, then ask when the finished visit happened.

When should you use the present perfect?

Form the present perfect with have or has plus a past participle: I have visited the museum. He has written a report. This form can connect a past action to the present. For 3AC practice, start with life experience when no finished date is given: Have you ever visited a museum? Yes, I have.

Ever means at any time up to now in this kind of question. Never gives a negative experience: I have never visited that museum. Do not add not as well: I haven't never... is not the standard pattern. When you give a finished date, switch to the past simple: I visited it last year.

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A FINISHED DATE OR EXPERIENCE?

The time reference changes the question.

1 Finished time
I visited the museum yesterday.



2 Experience up to now
I have visited the museum.



3 Ask for details
When did you visit it?

Read the examples. Explain the pattern. Make your own sentence.

The time reference changes the question.

How can two tenses appear in one conversation?

A conversation often starts with experience and then asks for details. Have you ever joined a school club? Yes, I have. When did you join? I joined last September. The first question asks whether the experience exists; the next question locates it in a finished past time. Do not choose a tense only because a sentence contains the word past. Use the situation and the time reference.

A worked example

Experience first, a date second

Sami: Have you ever visited the science museum? Nabil: Yes, I have. Sami: When did you go? Nabil: I went last Saturday and saw a water-pump model.

- Have you ever visited...? asks about experience up to now.
- When did you go? asks for a finished past time.

- Went and saw belong to the finished visit last Saturday.

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CHECK THE VERB FORM

The auxiliary and the main verb must work together.

1 Past simple question
Did you see the exhibition?



2 Present perfect question
Have you seen the exhibition?



3 A short reply
Yes, I have. I saw it on Saturday.

Read the examples. Explain the pattern. Make your own sentence.

The auxiliary and the main verb must work together.

How should I use this English 3AC lesson?

- Try the exercises before reading the answers.
- Explain a correction in your own words.
- Return to the examples when two structures look similar.

Exercises: try before reading the answers

1. Finished time

Complete: I ____ (visit) the library yesterday.

2. Experience

Complete: Have you ever ____ (see) a windmill?

3. Question form

Correct: When have you visit the museum yesterday?

4. Never

Rewrite without a double negative: I haven't never joined a club.

5. A follow-up

Ask for the date after a friend says: I have visited Rabat.

6. Compare meanings

Write one experience question and one question about a visit last week.

Answers and explanations

1. Finished time

Visited. Yesterday is a finished past time.

2. Experience

Seen. Have is followed by a past participle.

3. Question form

When did you visit the museum? Yesterday already supplies a finished time; use did + visit.

4. Never

I have never joined a club. Never already gives the negative meaning.

5. A follow-up

When did you visit Rabat? Ask for the finished date with the past simple.

6. Compare meanings

Have you ever visited a museum? Did you visit the museum last week? The first asks about experience; the second names a finished time.

Frequently asked questions

What is the difference between past simple and present perfect in 3AC?

Use past simple for a finished event at a finished past time. Use present perfect, have/has + participle, for experience without giving a finished date.

Can I say I have visited it yesterday?

In the standard pattern taught here, use I visited it yesterday. Yesterday is a finished past time.

What verb form comes after have or has?

Use the past participle: have seen, has written, have visited.

Revision resource: follow the units, instructions and pace set by your teacher.

[Read the full lesson and practise on MATHFJIB.](#)