

Has the World become a Better Place?

Present Perfect vs Past Simple



Two of the most important past tenses in English are past simple and present perfect.

Past simple describes something in the past that is finished or closed.

Eg. *I broke my arm last weekend.* (Past simple, finished)

Present perfect describes something that started in the past, but the subject or time period is open.

Eg. *I have broken 3 bones in my life.* (Present perfect, open)

Note: There is a “grey area” between past simple and present perfect. If something happened in the past, but is directly affecting the present, either tense is acceptable.

Eg. *Help me, I think I broke my hand!* (Past simple, finished)

Or

Help me, I think I ’ve broken my hand! (Present perfect, the broken hand is still affecting the present.)

	Past Simple	Present Perfect
Positive	I was in France last Summer	I have been on holiday twice this year
Negative	I didn't cook dinner last night	I have not cooked dinner yet
Closed Question	Did you like the film?	Have you seen the film?
Open Question	Who did you talk to last night?	Who have you talked to tonight?



1. Look at the facts about England below and decide whether they are past simple or present perfect. Then discuss the facts with a partner.

- Nearly 10% of English adults (16-64 year olds) have never had a job.
- In 2011 the population of England was 53 million.
- 6 million English people have never used the internet.
- Sparkling wine (commonly called champagne) was invented in England.
- England's greenhouse gas emissions have decreased by 25% in the last decade.
- At one point, the British Empire ruled 25% of the world's population.
- England sold (the original) London Bridge to Havasu City in Arizona in the 1960s. It was taken there brick by brick and reconstructed.





2. Read the conversation and complete it with verbs in brackets in the correct tense.

Graham: I don't really like the changes I (see) in the world in the last few years. It seems as if everything (become) more complicated. I think life (be) a lot simpler in the past, and people (talk) to each other more. Now everyone just stares at their phones.

Anton: I see what you mean, but I'm not so sure the "good old days" (be) as good as you remember. People (die) younger, they (get) sick more often, and there (be) a lot more war. And yes, technology (have) some pretty negative effects, but it (improve) a lot of things too.

Graham: More war? There (be) 4 wars so far this decade, I don't think there (be) more war in the past.

Anton: Well of course we (not/stop) going to war completely, but there (not/be) anything like World War 2 for 70 years. I think the wars in the past (be) bigger and more destructive.



3. Match the first half of the fact with the second half, and then discuss with a partner.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| a. The world's population | 1. child labour dropped by approximately 40%. |
| b. Young people | 2. cost 60% less in the 80's than it does today. |
| c. Between 2000 and 2016 | 3. has more than tripled in the last 70 years. |
| d. Since World War 2 | 4. was 20% higher in 1960 (adjusted for inflation). |
| e. Going to university | 5. wars between countries have become less common. |
| f. The minimum wage in America | 6. have become significantly more depressed in the last 20 years. |



4. You are going to watch a video which contains the following terms. Match the terms with their definitions.

- | | |
|----------------------------|--|
| a. The majority of | 1. At the moment |
| b. Poverty | 2. Medicine that prevents you from getting a disease |
| c. Vaccines | 3. The problem of not having enough money |
| d. Famine | 4. To not know about something |
| e. Unaware of | 5. When many people do not have enough food to survive |
| f. Life expectancy | 6. Most of |
| g. Current | 7. To be very nervous or excited about something |
| h. On the edge of our seat | 8. The average life span of a group of people |



5. Watch the video “[Dr. Max Roser: Our World in Data](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HQSQ16dntbc)”¹ and answer the questions.

- Do most people think the world is getting better?
- What was the average life expectancy in 1950?
- What percent of people lived in extreme poverty in the 1800s?
- The number of children dying below 5 years old has gone from 45% to 5% since 1800. What is one reason for this?
- How much has poverty fallen since 1800?



6. Pair work: with a partner discuss how the world has changed in the last 50 years. Write down at least 3 changes.

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HQSQ16dntbc>