

UNIT 2

Past tenses

PAST SIMPLE

FORM	I / You / He / She / It / We / They worked .	I / He / She / It was late.
	I / You / He / She / It / We / They did not work .	You / We / They were late.
	Did I / you / he / she / it / we / they work ?	Was I / he / she / it late?
		Were you / we / they late?

USES 1 **Talking about completed actions that happened in the past**
Alexander Graham Bell **invented** the telephone.
'**Did** you read the contract?' 'Yes, and I **sent** it back to the legal department.'

2 **Referring to a definite moment or period in the past**

I **met** the president *yesterday*.
I **spoke** to them *an hour ago*.
Google Inc. **launched** its web browser Google Chrome™ *in 2008*.
The standard of living in Europe **went up** *during the 1960s*.
Did you **discuss** the problem *at last week's meeting*?

3 **Describing something, e.g. the history of a company**



Two brothers, Will Keith Kellogg and Dr John Harvey Kellogg, **founded** the Battle Creek Toasted Corn Flake Company on February 19, 1906, in the belief that the public **needed** a lighter, healthier breakfast cereal. In 1922 the firm **changed** its name to the Kellogg Company.

To help consumers distinguish Kellogg's Corn Flakes® from the products of the 42 other cereal companies in Battle Creek, Michigan, W.K. **put** his signature on each package, saying that these Corn Flakes **were** the "The Original."

During the Great Depression of the 1930s, the firm **made** an original move. Instead of cutting back, it **doubled** advertising spending and Kellogg cereal sales **improved**. Employees **kept** their jobs, working 30 hours a week instead of 40. Some of the workers **earned** their paychecks by developing a 10-acre park on the Battle Creek plant grounds.

4 **In reports, e.g. a company's annual report**

We use the past simple in annual reports when they refer back to the previous year's trading:
Last year **was** a tough year for our group. On the one hand, we **earned** more than a billion dollars, we **generated** record cash flow and many of our businesses **posted** big gains in sales, profit and market share. On the other hand, our total earnings **declined**, our overseas subsidiaries **experienced** major problems and our US production facilities **underperformed**.

Combining past and present

PRESENT PERFECT SIMPLE (1)

FORM I / You / We / They **have worked**.
He / She / It **has worked**.

Have I / you / we / they **worked**?
Has he / she / it **worked**?

I / You / We / They **have not worked**.
He / She / It **has not worked**.

USES 1 Talking about present results of past actions

In this extract, the impact of information technology over the last few years is described in terms of its present significance:

IT **has shaken up** company structures just as much as external markets, says Vanessa Houlder. To enthusiasts, information technology is forging a productivity revolution. It **has changed** not just the nature of markets and competition. Inside companies, it **has** also **changed** behaviour. It **has broken down** the barriers of geography and time. It **has flattened** organisational structures, eliminating vast numbers of jobs, while making others more demanding and effective.

2 Announcing news

The use of the present perfect simple focuses on current relevance:

Our fax number **has changed**.

We've just **lowered** our prices.

They **have updated** their website.

The government **has announced** a decrease in corporation tax.

The transport minister **has launched** a plan to improve safety and security.

3 With time adverbs

We use the present perfect simple to say how long a situation that began in the past has lasted up to the moment of speaking:

He's **been** vice-president *for* ten years.

He's **had** the same job *since* 2006.

She's *always* **been** a creative person.

PRESENT PERFECT SIMPLE (2)

USES 4 Talking about life experiences

He's **done** many jobs in his time. He's **sold** encyclopaedias, he's **been** a journalist, he's **worked** in a shoe factory and now he's a trade unionist.

There is no focus here on *when* he did these things in the past. Only the experiences are important.

5 With expressions referring to 'time up to now'

Have you **ever** visited Beijing? (ever = at any previous time up to now)

I've **never** seen Niagara Falls. (never = at no previous time up to now)

I've **already** had a word with Bruce. (already = before now)

Hasn't she decided what to do **yet**? (yet = until the present time)

We've had a good year **so far**. (so far = up until now)

We've grown rapidly **over the last few years**. (= recent years up until now)

See page 14 for the time expressions which are used with the past simple and not the present perfect.

6 After *this is the first / second time*

This is the first time we **have (ever) received** a complaint.

It's only the second time we've **met**.

7 Referring to a completed event in the future after *when, as soon as, etc.*

I can't make a decision *if* I **haven't received** all the data.

I'll phone you *when* I've **received** confirmation. (OR when I **receive**)

I won't make a decision *until* I **have spoken** to the CEO. (OR until I **speak**)

I'll leave *as soon as* I've **finished**. (OR AS SOON AS I **finish**)

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I've been on more headed notepaper than you've had business lunches.