

Small talk with Present Perfect and Past Simple

Roleplay seeing each other by chance on a Wednesday on an underground train (= on the subway). Chat until one of you gets off at your stop five minutes later, including questions about last weekend and this week.

Which combination of questions would be suitable for use on Wednesday and today?

A: “How was your week?” and “How has your weekend been?”

B: “How has your week been?” and “How was your weekend?”

What two tenses are the questions above? Why are those two tenses used? What are the differences between them?

Fill the table below, including the questions above:

Name of tense	Present Perfect	Past Simple (“Simple” meaning just one verb, like Present Simple)
Example sentence (e.g. from above)		
Structure (“... + ...”, like “am/ is/ are + v +ing” for Present Continuous)	+	+
Meaning		
Time expressions with that tense		on Saturday

Fit these things into the table above:

- verb+ed or irregular versions (“did”, “ate”, etc)
- has/ have + PP (= past participle such as “done”)
- connected to the past and the present, for example an unfinished time or present consequence of a past action
- not connected to the present, so completely in the past
- last weekend
- this week

Do the same with these other time expressions:

- today
- at 7 a.m. today
- *yesterday*
- *the day before yesterday*
- *three days ago*
- last Wednesday
- *on Friday*
- *a week ago*
- *last week*
- this month
- in the last month (= since this time last month)
- *last month*
- this year
- *last year*
- in 2010
- since 2009
- *in the last decade or so*
- in the 17th century
- ever

Hint: seven of the expressions above go with Present Perfect and the other 12 go with Simple Past.

Try to think of the expressions which mean the same thing as the ones in italics above.

What’s the difference in meaning between “last year” and “in the last year”/ “in the last twelve months”?

Which one means each of these things?

- From January to December last year
- From exactly one year ago until now

What times would these things cover (precisely)?

- In the last week/ Last week
- Last century/ In the last century
- Yesterday/ In the last day

Ask each other suitable questions from below, making sure that you avoid unsuitable questions about things you already know, etc. Ask the question in the right tense, using the verb and subject in brackets (). Listen to the response, ask follow up questions if you like, then take turns asking and answering different questions from below.

Probably realistic questions/ situations

When _____ (you start) your present job?
How long _____ (you have) your present job?
_____ (you ever go) on a business trip abroad?
What time _____ (you finish) work last night?
Where _____ (you last go) on holiday (= vacation)?
_____ (you ever meet)...?
That's a nice... Where _____ (you buy) it?
_____ (you be) busy this week?
_____ (you have) many meetings so far this week?
_____ (you have) a good weekend?
How _____ (your weekend be)?

Possibly realistic and possibly unrealistic questions/ situations

_____ (you see) the game/ match (between... and ...) (at the weekend)?
_____ (you go) to the meeting about... yesterday?
_____ (you change) your hair (since I last saw you)?
_____ (you finish)...?
_____ (you have) the chance to... (today/ this week)?/
_____ (you have) the time to... (today/ this week)?/

Probably unrealistic situations/ imaginary situations

_____ (we meet) before?
_____ (you have) any trouble finding us?/
_____ (you have) any problems getting here?
_____ (you come) far today?
_____ (you have) a good flight/ a good journey?
_____ (you have) a good holiday/ a good trip?
Who _____ (you fly) with?
When _____ (you get back) from...?
When _____ (you arrive) in Tokyo?
Long time no see. How _____ (you be)?
How long has it been since _____ (we last meet)?

Do the same, but this time asking any question you like, with your partner imagining that they are in different situations if that is needed to be able to answer.

Work together to fill the gaps above with the correct tenses and the subject given.

Check your answers, then ask any questions that you got wrong or didn't ask before.

Use similar questions as you roleplay the beginning of a business meeting, starting from "Hello" and continuing until you get down to business.