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How do you choose between the **Present Perfect** and **Past Perfect**?

Both Present Perfect and Past Perfect are used to talk about something that happened **before a point in time** (reference point).

In the **Present Perfect**, our reference point is the **present**.

- *My mother **has just gone** to the store.*

In the **Past Perfect**, our reference point is in the **past**.

- *I **had been** to Japan twice by the time I was 10 years old.*

Here's a depiction of this difference:



via

<https://englishlive.ef.com/blog/language-lab/english-grammar-help-present-perfect-and-past-perfect/>

Present Perfect or Past Perfect?

So, how do you choose between the Present Perfect and Past Perfect?

Present Perfect

The **Present Perfect** is used to talk about an action that took place in the recent past and is still relevant to the present moment.

- *The bus **has left** and we have to wait for another one.*

The structure is:

have / has + Past Participle

The common usages of Present Perfect are:

1. to put emphasis on the result: – *She **has broken** a cup.*
2. to express an action that started in the past and continues up to the present: – *I **have worked** for this company for 10 years.*
3. to talk about life experiences: – *I've never **traveled** alone.*
4. to say about an action repeated in an unspecified period between the past and now: – *I **have visited** them many times.*
5. when the precise time of action is not important or unknown: – *Someone **has stolen** my bike!*

Past Perfect

The Past Perfect is used to talk about an action that took place before another moment in the past.

- *The bus **had left** before we arrived to the station.*

The structure is:

had + Past Participle

The common usages of Past Perfect are:

1. to express an action taking place before a certain time in the past; when we want to put emphasis on the fact, not the duration: – *Before Jemmy arrived here, she **had spoken** to him.*
2. to report what people had thought/said/believed/told: *He told me that he **had** already **watched** this movie.*

Comparing

Consider the following examples:

Present Perfect

have / has + Past Participle

Past Perfect

had + Past Participle

*I **am** so excited. I **have** just **passed** my exam.*

*We've **finished** the game and now we **have** dinner.*

*His team **has won** and he's very happy.*

*I **was** so excited. I **had passed** my exam.*

*We'd **finished** the game when mom **called** us for dinner.*

*His team **had won**, so he **went** to the bar to celebrate their victory.*

In this video you'll find more examples and explanation of the difference between Present Perfect and Past Perfect:

See also:

[Present Perfect Continuous or Past Perfect Continuous?](#)

[Present Perfect or Past Simple?](#)

[Present Perfect or Present Perfect Continuous?](#)