

6 Worksheet on Grammar

1 TENSES: PAST SIMPLE AND PRESENT PERFECT

Text: Josiah Strong, *Our Country*, from: Peter Freese, *The American Dream*, Viewfinder Topics (München: Langenscheidt, 2011), p. 37.

A GRAMMAR FILE

Past simple

The **past simple** refers to situations that took place at a **definite time in the past**. These situations may be single events (cf. (1)) or events that repeatedly occurred at that time (cf. (2)). The past simple is also used in story-telling/when a series of events happen one after another.

Present perfect

The **present perfect** refers to »situations set at some **indefinite time** within a **period of time** beginning in the past and leading up to the present.«¹ Those situations may be states (cf. (3)), single events (cf. (4)) or events that have repeatedly occurred within that period of time (cf. (5)).

Examples

(1) Johann Sebastian Bach *died* in 1750.

(2) When we *were* young we always *spent* our summer holidays at my grandma's house in Cornwall.

(3) I *have lived* in my father's house for ten

years. (Also: *I have been living*... Present Perfect Progressive)

(4) We *have met* him only once (in our lives/up to now).

(5) I *have worked* with this company since 2000.

(Also: *I have been working*... Present Perfect Progressive)

Signal words

Any adverbials that relate to the past:

yesterday, last week/ month..., two days... ago.

for five weeks, **for** ten years

since 1945

(both also used with the present perfect progressive)

¹ Greenbaum, Quirk: *A Student's Grammar of the English Language* (London: Longman, 2006), p. 51.

Formation

Very often the past simple ends in **-ed** (regular verbs); for irregular forms consult a list of irregular verbs.

For and **since** are used to say how long something has been happening. The present perfect is "have/has" + past participle. The past participle often ends in -ed, but many verbs are irregular (lost, done, written etc.). You use **for + a period of time** (for five weeks) and **since + the start of a period** (since 2011).

B TASKS

1. Read the text *Our Country* by Josiah Strong and explain briefly why the author uses the past simple or present perfect in the following examples taken from this text:

- a) »Since prehistoric times, populations have moved steadily westward [...].« (ll. 1f.)
- b) »And following their migrations, the course of empire [...] has westward taken its way.« (ll. 3-5)
- c) »The world's scepter passed from Persia to Greece, from Greece to Italy, from Italy to Great Britain [...].« (ll. 5-7)
- d) »[...] the star in the East which guided the three kings with their treasures westward until at length it stood still over the cradle of the young Christ [...].« (ll. 11-13)
- e) »[...] so the star of empire [...] has ever beckoned the wealth and power of the nations westward [...].« (ll. 13-15)

2. Present perfect or past simple? Complete the sentences with the correct form of the verb.

- a) Josiah Strong (write) the text *Our Country* in 1885.
- b) He claims that populations (advance) westward for thousands of years.
- c) Moreover, he refers to the three kings who (follow) the star in the east.
- d) Josiah maintains that »civil liberty« and »pure *spiritual* Christianity« constantly (improve) humankind.
- e) He believes that the Anglo-Saxons (be) superior since Great Britain (become) a world power.

2 /F-CLAUSES

Text: James Truslow Adams, "The American Dream", from: Peter Freese, *The American Dream*, Viewfinder Topics (Munich: Langenscheidt, 2011), pp. 10f.

A GRAMMAR FILE

If-clauses

If-clauses express a condition under which something is true. Hence, they are also called conditional clauses.

Open conditions

Open conditions do not show whether the condition is fulfilled or unfulfilled.

Examples

- (1) *If Fiona is in London*, she is probably staying in Gemma's place.
- (2) *If Ben cheats on her*, he will have a hard time.

The sentence in (1) does not indicate whether Fiona is in London, and therefore it is not clear whether she is staying in Gemma's place. Likewise, (2) does not show if Ben cheats on her and will thus have a hard time.

Hypothetical conditions

In contrast, hypothetical conditions *are not* fulfilled at the moment (cf. (3)) or *were not* fulfilled in the past (cf. (4)).

Examples

- (3) *If Ben worked hard*, he would pass the exam.
- (4) *If Ben had worked hard*, he would have passed the exam.

In (3) the speaker implies that Ben *is not* working hard now, in (4) the speaker insinuates that Ben *did not* work hard in the past. Note that hypothetical *if*-clauses always include the past tense, usually the *past simple* as in (3) or the *past perfect* as in (4), while open *if*-clauses include the *present simple* as in (1) and (2).

Matrix clause

The clause that accompanies the *if*-clause is called **matrix clause**. It usually involves the auxiliary “will” or “would” and a form of the main verb.

For **open conditions**, the matrix clause normally includes “will” and the infinitive of the main verb (cf. »will have« in (2)). In rare cases, it contains the present simple or present progressive (cf. (1)).

For **hypothetical conditions**, the matrix clause *always* includes “would” and the infinitive of the main verb (if the *if*-clause contains the past simple, cf. (3)) or “would”, “have” and the past participle of the main verb (if the *if*-clause involves the past perfect). Hence, “will” or “would” *never* appear in the *if*-clause. For a brief summary of these patterns cf. (5) and (6):

- (5) Open conditions: *if*-clause = present simple, matrix clause = *will*-future (“will” + infinitive of the main verb)
- (6) a. Hypothetical conditions: *if*-clause = past simple, matrix clause = “would” + infinitive of the main verb
b. Hypothetical conditions: *if*-clause = past perfect, matrix clause = “would” + “have” + past participle of the main verb

B TASKS

1. Mark all *if*-clauses in James Truslow Adams’ text *The American Dream*.

2. For each clause, determine whether it describes an open or a hypothetical condition.

[Please note that the clause “if we are to have a rich and full life” (l. 31) can be paraphrased as follows: “if we want to have a rich and full life”.]

3. Complete the sentences below:

- a) If the American dream cannot come true, we (become stark realists).
- b) If the American dream had only been a dream of material wealth, not as many people (immigrate to the US).

- c) If those on top devoted themselves to the "Great Society", that dream
..... (come true).
- d) If you had been able to grow to fullest development as man and woman, you
..... (live a happy life).
- e) If you immigrate to the US, you (have a better chance of
realizing that dream).

4. Answer the questions in the same way as in (4a).

- a) A: Shall we attend that lecture on the American Dream?
B: Yes. (improve our chances of passing the exams) *If we attend that lecture, we
will improve our chances of passing the exams.*
- b) A: Did Fiona call you last night?
B: No. (she / come here today)
.....
- c) A: Is Ben good at American history?
B: No. (he / have better grades)
.....
- d) A: Are you going to ask the lecturer about our exams?
B: No. (he / give a pompous remark)
.....
- e) A: Did you revise the facts about the American Dream before your last exam?
B: No. (I / not have got such a poor result.)
.....

(Christian Schröter)