

GOLD

experience



Unit 1 – present tenses
and time expressions

Which present tenses?

There are many time expressions which are commonly used with certain tenses and structures. Let's look at these and when we use them in more depth:

1. Present simple.
2. Present continuous.
3. Present perfect simple.
4. Present perfect continuous.



When do we use them?

present simple and continuous

When do we use them and what time expressions are typically used?



I go to the gym every other day and frequently see your brother there.

Really? He's constantly complaining about having no time! *I'm currently going to a personal trainer. It's great that nowadays, people are exercising more.*



Look at *the italic sections*. Which girl is talking about:
a. a routine or habit?
b. something that is happening now; a temporary action?

Which girl also mentions an annoying habit that someone else does a lot?

Can you find the different time expressions?

Try to think about why these specific time expressions are used in these contexts.

- a. Girl 1
- b. Girl 2

Girl 2: he's constantly complaining

Every other day, frequently, constantly, currently, nowadays

present simple and continuous

Look at the uses of these grammatical structures and the typical time expressions used with them.

A. **I go to the gym every other day** and **frequently see your brother** there.

B. Really? **He's constantly complaining** about having no time! **I'm currently going** to a personal trainer. It's great that nowadays, people are exercising more.

present simple

To talk about habits, repeated actions, and things that are true.

Expressions of frequency. E.g. every other day, once in a while, from time to time.

Adverbs of frequency. E.g. regularly, frequently, rarely, often.

present continuous

To describe actions happening now or around now, and temporary actions.

To describe annoying habits.

Expressions describing now or around now. E.g. nowadays, right now, this year, at the moment.

Expressions of temporary actions. E.g. currently, for the time being.

Adverbs of frequency for annoying habits. E.g. constantly, continually, always.

Expressions of changing actions. E.g. all the time, these days.

Time expressions

present simple and continuous

Things to consider...



Look at this example.

I have so much work **at the moment!**

This sentence talks about a temporary action, but notice that it is in the present simple, not continuous. This is because *have* in this context is a **state**, not action verb.

- We do not use **state verbs** in the continuous structures. They are always in the simple tenses.
- We can also use time expressions to describe actions happening now or around now with state verbs in the present simple. Look...
- Some verbs can be **state verbs** or **action verbs** depending on the context.
- Example:
 1. I **was thinking** about Laura when she walked in.
Think here is an action verb. You can imagine the speaker's brain working.
 2. I **think** he's German.
Think here is a state verb meaning the same as *believe*.

What about present perfect simple and continuous?

present perfect simple and continuous

When do we use them and what time expressions are typically used?

I've known my best friend, Karen, for over 15 years. She's been living in Canada since 2009, but I've just returned from a trip to visit her. **She's changed a lot physically**, but her personality is the same. **We've spoken many times on the phone** over the years and have been talking about meeting for ages.



Match the sections in **bold** to the uses of these grammatical structures.

present perfect simple

States that start in the past and continue to now

I've known my best friend.

Recently finished actions

I've just returned.

Past actions with a present result

She's changed a lot physically.

Past action/state(s) with no specific past time

We've spoken many times on the phone.

present perfect continuous

Actions that start in the past and continue to now

She's been living in Canada since 2009.

Can you find the different time expressions?

*for over 15 years,
since 2009,
just,
over the years,
for ages*

Try to think about why these specific time expressions are used in these contexts.

present perfect simple and continuous

I've known my best friend, Karen, for over 15 years.

We've spoken many times on the phone.

She's changed a lot physically.

She's been living in Canada since 2009.

I've just returned from a trip to visit her.

present perfect simple

present perfect continuous

States that start in the past and continue to now

Actions that start in the past and continue to now

Recently finished actions

Past actions with a present result

Past state/action(s) with no specific past time



Look at these examples.

- A. **She's changed** a lot physically.
- B. **She's been changing** recently.

result

action

Focus on result > present perfect simple.
Focus on the action > present perfect continuous.

The verb *change* is used in both these examples, but in A, there is a focus on the result and in B, the action.

present perfect simple and continuous

What time expressions are commonly used?

Some expressions are used with both structures.



present perfect simple

present perfect continuous

Unfinished time expressions. E.g. for, since, this morning, in the last 2 days, over the past few weeks, all day.

Time expressions for recent time. E.g. recently, lately, in recent weeks.

Ever: to ask about a general past experience, e.g. Have you ever seen a giraffe?;

Never: can be used to replace 'not' when talking about general past experiences, e.g. I haven't been to France/I have never been to France.

Already: to emphasize an action was completed in the past without mentioning a specific time, e.g. He has already eaten;

Yet: to say an action wasn't completed in the past, but indicate it probably will be soon. E.g. She hasn't eaten yet (but will in 10 minutes).

Just: to indicate an action finished very recently without mentioning when. E.g. They just got back.

These are only used with the present perfect simple

How do I use these time expressions in a sentence?

time expressions and word order

Now we know **when** to use the different time expressions, but **how** do we use them.



1 I **2** go to the gym **3**

1 People are **2** exercising **3**

We can consider 3 positions when talking of word order – beginning, middle, end.

Try to remember the examples from earlier and match the time expressions to the correct position.

Some time expressions can go in more than one position. More on this later...

1 Beginning of the sentence

2 Middle: before main verb

3 End of the sentence

for the time being

every other day

nowadays

constantly

frequently

all the time

time expressions and word order

Now we know **when** to use the different time expressions, but **how** do we use them.

1 She has **2** changed physically **3**

1 Beginning of the sentence

2 Middle: before main verb

3 End of the sentence

yet (in the negative)

already

since she started exercising

over the years

time expressions and word order

Now we know **when** to use the different time expressions, but **how** do we use them.

1 Beginning of the sentence

2 Middle: before main verb

3 End of the sentence

frequently

for the time being

constantly

every other day

already

nowadays

all the time

yet (in the negative)

since she started exercising

over the years



These time expressions can also go in position 1 at the beginning of a sentence

Notice how most of the adverbs are in the middle position whereas the adverbial phrases are at the end or beginning.

If the verb is just *to be* in the present simple, the time expression goes **after**, not before. E.g. I am always late.

Let's practise!

Practice activities

Complete the gaps.

Jenny **has been studying**. (study) to be a doctor for almost 7 years and next month, she will finally graduate. Right now, she **is preparing**. (prepare) for her final exams and **is working**. (work) on her final thesis. She occasionally **takes**. (take) a break to go to the gym, and lately, **has been doing**. (do) yoga to relax in the evening. It's a bit annoying because she **is always talking**. (always/talk) about medicine and she **hasn't started**. (start) work yet!

Put the words in order to make sentences.

1. Daniel living father is for being. time with his the

Daniel is living with his father for the time being.

2. We practising been in weeks. recent have lot a

We have been practicing a lot in recent weeks.

3. Mary travelling currently is Europe. around

Mary is currently travelling around Europe.