

A BRIEF ENGLISH LESSON

The following sentence contains a *very common* mistake:

I have seen him yesterday. ☹

It should be:

*I **saw** him **yesterday**.* ☺

Why? Well, in English, you NEVER use the *Present Perfect* (I have seen etc.) with a *specific past time expression* (yesterday, last week, in 2002 etc.). When you use a *past time expression*, you use a *past time form* (I saw etc.)

The *Present Perfect* always has something to do with the present. For example, the **result in the present** is important:

I have finished my work - so now I can go home.

He has had lunch - so he is not hungry now.

Or you are announcing "**hot news**":

She has arrived! - so she is here now.

I've found a new job! – so I am now employed again.

Or it is part of our **present experience**:

She has had 3 husbands. – so she knows something about marriage!

He has never seen the sea. – so he doesn't know what it looks like.

Ready to test yourself? In the sentences below, put the verb in brackets into the gap in the correct time form – *Present Perfect* (I have done, he has done etc) or *Past Simple* (I did, he did etc.) It's very easy: if it has no past time reference, use the *Present Perfect*, if it refers to a specific moment in the past, with a *specific past time expression*, use the *Past Simple*.

1. More cake? No, I enough, thanks. (HAVE)
2. Transportation costs up so we'll have to put up our prices. (GO)
3. I all this at the meeting last Monday. (EXPLAIN)
4. Don't talk to her right now. She a bad day. (HAVE)
5. Last year we a 20% profit, which means we can relax a bit! (MAKE)
6. you costs when you him? (DISCUSS, SEE)
7. I the report. Shall I send it to you? (FINISH)
8. He it a week ago, so it should be here now. (SEND)
9. They the whole department. You won't recognize it. (REORGANIZE)
10. Well, I off the PCs, the printers and the photocopier. Let's go! (SWITCH)

And the answers?

1. More cake? No, I **have had** enough, thanks.
2. Transportation costs **have gone** up so we'll have to put up our prices.
3. I **explained** all this at the meeting last Monday.
4. Don't talk to her right now. She **has had** a bad day.
5. Last year we **made** a 20% profit, which means we can relax a bit!
6. **Did** you **discuss** costs when you **saw** him?
7. I **have finished** the report. Shall I send it to you?
8. He **sent** it a week ago, so it should be here now.
9. They have **reorganized** the whole department. You won't recognize it.
10. Well, I have **switched** off the PCs, the printers and the photocopier. Let's go!