

## Section 4 past and perfect tenses

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#### language notes

The advertisements reproduced on this page show how both the simple and progressive forms of the present perfect are used to talk about continuing activity up to the present, often with little or no difference of meaning. One of the advertisements contains a present perfect passive – can students find it?

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#### possible further activities

**Memory test (1)** Give students cards with the names of continuous actions. For example: read, write, dance, sit on the floor, walk, scratch your head, clap your hands, sing. Shout 'Start!'. Students do their actions and continue for about 30 seconds until you shout 'Stop!', observing each other's actions at the same time. They then have to try to write down what everybody was doing when you shouted 'Stop!'. ('When you shouted 'Stop!', Alicia was dancing, Hiroko was clapping her hands ...')

**Memory test (2)** If the classroom overlooks a street, get students to look out of the window for a minute (no longer) and memorise what they see. Some time later, ask what they can remember (perhaps working in groups). They should be careful about using tenses appropriately: e.g. 'People were shopping; a police car drove past; the sun was shining; a bus stopped ...'.

**Extending Exercise 2** Ask students to write the story from the ostrich's point of view. (Explain that if ostriches could write, they would certainly write in English!) Or, more seriously, ask them to write about an unusual incident (real or imaginary) that has happened to them while travelling. They should use some grammar and vocabulary from the text.

The unstressed forms of auxiliaries *was* and *were* can be difficult to hear in fast speech. The CD-ROM exercises will help students to perceive these, and to pronounce past progressive forms with natural rhythm.

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#### language notes

These relatively straightforward distinctions between the present perfect and the simple past should be well known to most students at this level. However, confusions still occur. The 'connection with the present' sense expressed by the present perfect is abstract and somewhat nebulous, and is not easy for all students to grasp. Also, several Western European languages have a 'false friend' tense, which is constructed in the same way as the present perfect (with the equivalent of *have* + past participle), but which can be used like the English simple past. This can lead to continuing mistakes like:

*\*I've got a letter from Franz yesterday.*

*\*Some people think Shakespeare's plays have been written by somebody else.*

Other languages have a 'perfective' form which expresses completion (but not necessarily any connection with the present); speakers of these languages may also misuse the present perfect under the influence of their mother tongue.

The unstressed forms of auxiliaries *has* and *have* can be difficult to hear in fast speech. The CD-ROM exercises will help students to perceive these, to distinguish present perfect from past, and to pronounce present perfect forms with natural rhythm.

### possible further activities

**Extending Exercise 1** Put students in small groups. Each group should make up two or three more questions like the ones in the exercise. When they are ready, the groups ask the class their questions.

**How many times? (1)** Ask students to write true or false completions for the following sentences:

I ... times last week/month/year.

I have ... times this week/month/year.

**How many times? (2)** Students work in groups. They have to find something that someone in the group has done once; something that someone has done twice; and so on up to five or more times. Then they report to the class. ('Jeanne has been to Paris once; Luc has broken his leg twice; ... Oliver has been in love eight times ...')

**News and details** Copy the following reports and cut each of them into two separate sentences. Mix up the sentences and distribute them. Students have to find their 'other half'.

Lord Hate, the 'Singing Psycho from Space', has arrived in Britain for a three-week tour. 4000 screaming teenage fans were at the airport to welcome him.

President Murando of Fantasia has arrived in Britain for high-level talks. The Prime Minister met him at the airport and accompanied him to his hotel.

A Cambridge scientist has discovered a cheap new miracle fuel. She hit on the secret while studying the chemistry of a group of organic compounds.

TV chef Marianne Huxley has discovered a cheap new miracle health food which, she says, cures all known diseases.

She hit on the secret while looking for new ways of making potato salad.

Sally Pendragon, the 'Flying Grandmother', has won the Round-Britain cycle race for the third year running.

She beat Luke Prior, her closest rival, by 4 hours and 17 minutes.

Amelia Lobot has won the contest for leadership of the United Reactionary Radical Party. She beat Roland Collier, her closest rival, by 80,000 votes.

A Derbyshire housewife has found the wedding ring that she lost while canoeing on her honeymoon 40 years ago.

It turned up yesterday in a fish that she was preparing for the family dinner.

A Welsh solicitor has found a lost painting by the Dutch artist Rembrandt.

She discovered it while she was looking in the attic for something to kill wasps.

Scottish schoolchildren have made a gigantic model of Edinburgh Castle.

They used 400,000 egg-boxes.

Engineers have completed the flood barrier across the River Severn.

They used 4000 tonnes of steel and concrete.

A small plane has crashed in woodlands near Liverpool.

The pilot and his passenger, who escaped with minor injuries, were able to walk to a nearby pub to ask for help.

Two mineral prospectors have survived a crash in a remote part of Northern Canada.

It took the pilot and his passenger, who had only minor injuries, over a week to reach civilisation.

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### language notes

This summary will be particularly useful to those students who like to have an explicit understanding of how the grammar works. It would be very good to translate it into the students' mother tongue(s), if this is feasible.

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### possible further activities

**Extending Exercises 1 and 2** Ask students to write five or more sentences on one or both of the following patterns, talking about people or things they knew once that have probably not changed.

I liked (person) because ...

I liked (place) because ...

**Backgrounding** Give students (working individually) a few minutes to invent really extravagant pieces of untrue self-promotional 'backgrounding' (like 'I was having lunch with the President yesterday, and she said ...'). Then see who has thought of the best example.

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### language notes

While the information on these pages will be useful for advanced students who are aiming at a high level of accuracy, it is important not to be too perfectionist. Teachers sometimes spend a disproportionate amount of time working on complex aspects of grammar (like the present perfect) which are difficult to reduce to simple rules, and which can cause learners continuing difficulty. Remember that mistakes in this area are generally unimportant, and there are many other things that need attention.

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### language notes

The explanations here describe tendencies rather than hard and fast rules. As can be seen from the advertisements on page 40, both simple and progressive forms are often possible in similar contexts.

### possible further activities

**Friendly/unfriendly letters** Ask students to write a few sentences to complete the following beginning to a friendly or unfriendly letter (to a real or imaginary person):

Dear X

I've been wanting to tell you this for ages. ...

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### language notes

Unstressed auxiliary *had* can be difficult to hear in fast speech. The CD-ROM exercises will help students to perceive this, to identify past perfect forms, and to pronounce them with natural rhythm.

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## possible further activities

**Split sentences** Copy the following sentences and cut them into two halves as shown. Give each student a half-sentence; they have to find their other halves.

- She couldn't get in | because she'd forgotten her key.
- I couldn't buy a ticket | because I'd spent all my money.
- I missed the train | because I'd mistaken the time.
- We couldn't find the restaurant | because we'd lost the address.
- I couldn't phone you | because my battery had run down.
- She passed her exam | because she'd studied hard.
- I woke up late | because I'd forgotten to set my alarm.
- He had trouble getting a job | because he'd been in prison.
- She spoke good Chinese | because she'd spent a year in Beijing.
- I wasn't hungry | because I'd eaten too much breakfast.
- I was tired | because I hadn't slept very well.
- I couldn't see anything | because I'd broken my glasses.

**Personalisation** Give students a few minutes to think of a time when a journey or arrangement went wrong because they had forgotten something. Then get them to tell the others. This can be done in groups of three or four; then each group chooses one of their stories to tell the whole class.

**Internet** Ask students to find an interesting sentence on the internet beginning "They said that they had never".

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### possible further activities

**Class story** Get the class to suggest or write a few more sentences to continue the following story, including examples of 'When I had' or 'After I had'.

**Plane crash**

I managed to get out of the plane, which fortunately had not caught fire, and sat down until I had got over the first shock. When I had recovered a little ...

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### possible further activities

**Beginning a story** Who can write the most interesting completion for the following sentence, which is the beginning of an imaginary novel?

I was astonished when I discovered that X had been ...ing for months.

**Internet** Ask students to guess which of the following will have most hits on an internet search, and which will have least:

- "because they had been eating"
- "because they had been playing"
- "because they had been talking"
- "because they had been thinking"
- "because they had been walking"
- "because they had been running"
- "because they had been working"

Then get them to search and see if they were right.

### language notes

Students may find this use of the present perfect quite strange. A present tense may seem to them much more natural and logical. (As indeed it is; none the less, we generally use a present perfect!)

### possible further activities

**Vocabulary expansion and memory test** Prepare a lot of pictures (e.g. cut-out magazine advertisements, or images printed from the internet) of each of six different things whose names the students don't know. For example:

spice rack, ice-hockey puck, satellite dish, icicle, cardigan, golf club

Show students one picture of each thing and teach its name. Then go on showing the pictures in random order. Students have to say or write: 'That's the second/third/fourth/ etc ... that we've seen' or '... that you've shown us'. As the game continues, it will become increasingly hard for them to keep count of everything they've seen.