

## REVISION: SIMPLE PAST AND PRESENT PERFECT

*Talking about the past is often difficult for several reasons, as there are two basic tenses in English that are used to do so: the present perfect and the simple past. It is the different usage of the present perfect and the simple past to German that causes particular difficulties for students of English. The situation is not helped by the fact that in American English the simple past is sometimes used when the present perfect is more usual in British English. So an American might ask "Did you do it yet?", whereas British people would say "Have you done it yet?". Students also find it confusing because when using the equivalent of "for" or "since" in German, the present tense is used, whereas in English the present perfect is needed.*

### I. THE SIMPLE PAST

**The simple past is used to describe activities, states or events that are over and have nothing to do with the present. The stress is on the time or period of time at which something took place.**

1. Underline the simple past forms in the following paragraph.

After their evening meal, Jonas and his family share their feelings about events during the day. His younger sister Lily begins, "I felt very angry this afternoon. My Childcare group was at the play area and we had a visiting group of Sevens, and they didn't obey the rules at all."

➔ *In the evening Lily is talking about a series of events that happened in the afternoon and are now over.*

2. Note down how we form the simple past.

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3. Note down signal words for the simple past.

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## II. THE PRESENT PERFECT

**a) The present perfect describes activities, states or events that began in the past but have continued into the present. The result of the past event is more important than when it took place.**

1. Underline the present perfect forms.

Asher apologizes when he is late for school and mistakenly says he got “distraught” ([verzweifelt] instead of distracted [abgelenkt]) when he saw some workers separating fish. His teacher thanks him for his apology, saying, “And I thank you, because once again you have provided an opportunity for a lesson in language.”

➔ *The result of the past event (i. e. Asher misusing the word) is in the present, as the teacher can now explain the correct usage to the students.*

At the Ceremony of Twelve, during which all twelve-year-olds are given their Life Assignments, the Chief Elder tells them, “You Elevens have spent your years till now learning to fit in”.

➔ *They started learning in the past and have continued doing so right up to this moment in time.*

**b) The present perfect is also used to say whether something has happened yet or ever.**

When Jonas is given his Life Assignment, he is chosen to be the community’s Receiver of Memory. The Chief Elder tells him that his training will involve pain. She explains, “You have never experienced that.”

➔ Up to this point in time, he has not had any pain.

**c) The present perfect is also used to say whether something has just happened.**

Jonas has just finished reading his assignment.

➔ The action has just finished.

2. Note down how we form the present perfect.
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3. Note down signal words for the present perfect.
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