The Present Perfect in English - A Complete Guide (1/5)

This course is designed to provide you with a comprehensive understanding of the present perfect tense in English, a crucial aspect of the language that enables speakers to link past actions or events to the present moment.

1/ Understanding the Present Perfect

The present perfect tense is formed using the auxiliary verb 'have' (or 'has' for third person singular) followed by the past participle of the main verb. The structure is as follows:

- **Affirmative sentences:** Subject + have/has + past participle
  
  E.g., *I have eaten*, *she has gone*.

- **Negative sentences:** Subject + have/has + not + past participle
  
  E.g., *I have not seen*, *he has not finished*.

- **Interrogative sentences:** Have/Has + subject + past participle?
  
  E.g., *Have you heard?*, *Has she arrived?*.
2/ Key Uses of the Present Perfect

- Unspecified Time Before Now: We use the present perfect to talk about experiences or changes that have occurred at an unspecified time in the past. The exact time is not important.
  For example, "She has visited Paris." Here, the focus is on the experience of visiting Paris, not when the visit happened.

- Changes Over Time: This tense is also used to describe changes that have happened over a period leading up to the present.
  For example, "He has grown so much since the last time I saw him." 

- Accomplishments: We often use the present perfect to discuss accomplishments or actions completed during a time period that is not yet finished.
  For example, "They have won three matches this season." 

- Life Experiences: The present perfect is ideal for talking about life experiences without specifying when they occurred.
  For instance, "I have been to Spain three times."
• Actions Repeated in an Unspecified Period: This tense can describe actions that have occurred multiple times in the past without a specific time frame. For example, "We have watched that movie several times."

3/ Time Expressions with the Present Perfect

Certain time expressions are commonly used with the present perfect. These include:

• Already: Indicates that something has happened sooner than expected. E.g., "I have already finished my homework."

• Yet: Used in negative sentences and questions to talk about something that hasn't happened but is expected to. E.g., "Have you finished your homework yet?"

• Just: Used to indicate that something happened a short while ago. E.g., "She has just left the office."
Ever: Often used in questions to ask about experiences at any time up to now.
E.g., "Have you ever been to Japan/?dʒəˈpæn/?"

Never: Indicates that something has not happened at any time up to now.
E.g., "I have never seen a shooting star."

4/ Forming the Past Participle

The past participle is a key element in forming the present perfect tense. Here's how you can form it:

- Regular Verbs: Add 'ed' to the base form of the verb
  E.g., talk - talked, watch - watched.

- Irregular Verbs: These do not follow a standard pattern and must be memorized
  E.g., go - gone, see - seen.
5/ Present Perfect Tense Exercise

Explain why we use the present perfect in each of these sentences.

- I have never visited Australia, but I hope to one day.
- She has just finished her homework, so she can relax now.
- They haven’t seen the new movie yet, but they plan to go this weekend.
- How many times have you eaten sushi this month?
- We have already booked our flights for the holiday.
- He has lived/has been living in London for three years now.