

Using the present perfect tense

To talk about things that we have experienced in life, we use the present perfect tense. Note that this usage is possible only when there is no definite time reference. For example, we cannot use the present perfect tense to say that something happened to us on a particular day.

Form: Subject + has / have + past participle form of the verb

I have never seen a ghost.

I have been to all the continents in the world.

I have experienced despair.

I have seen that movie.

I have faced many setbacks in life.

I have read all novels written by Mark Twain.

I have seen her before.

I have played cricket at the national level.

I have written a novel.

I have attended a few workshops on acting.

If we say when something happened, we use the simple past tense.

I wrote a story last year. (NOT I have written a story last year.)

I watched that movie yesterday. (NOT I have watched that movie yesterday.)

Using the present perfect tense

I faced many setbacks in 2012. (NOT I have faced many setbacks in 2012.)

Now think about a life experience that started in the past and has continued up to the present. For example, consider this situation. You got married to the man you love some ten years ago and you are still married to him. How do you express this idea in English? Well, you can use a sentence like this.

I have been married to Peter for ten years.

How long have you been married to Alice?