

Perfect Forms in Time

There are six perfect forms: the Present Perfect Simple and Continuous, the Past Perfect Simple and Continuous and the so-called Future Perfect Simple and Continuous.

All the Simple and all the Continuous forms have the same basic meaning.

Eg:

1. London was founded over a thousand years ago by the Romans.

The focus in this sentence is the founding of the city **in the Past**. **There is no connection with now**.

2. London has stood on the banks of the River Thames for over a thousand years.

The focus in this sentence is the **relationship** between London being there for over a thousand years and London still being there (now).

3. She had left before I arrived.

The focus of this sentence is the **relationship** between the two past events: she left, I arrived.

4. I might have finished my report by the deadline.

The focus in this 'future perfect' sentence is the **relationship** between the two future 'events': the report being finished and the deadline but also seen from 'now'

Perfect forms always focus on an important relationship between two events or states.

The **Simple Past** by contrast focuses on something which is **finished** and **does not** focus on relationship with other point (like, for example, 'now'). Things are only really Past if they are finished.

Perfect Continuous forms add an element of the activity **in progress**.

5. I've been waiting for over an hour. She still hasn't arrived!

The focus in this sentence is the **relationship** between waiting for over an hour and the fact that I am still waiting.

Task. What are the two events or states which these sentences are linking together?

1. I've lived here for ten years now. *Eg I still live here. I started 10 years ago.*
2. When you've finished that, how about doing the dishes?
3. Inflation will have risen to 5% by the end of the year.
4. Lady Jane Grey had only been queen for a few days when she was deposed and executed.
5. I've been working at this for over an hour and I haven't finished yet. Time is running out.
6. I've been thinking over the problem and I think I have a solution.
7. I've never met anyone as rude as him before.
8. Have you met Jane before, Ian? Jane, this is Ian.
9. A Nigerian writer, 33-year-old Helon Habila, has won the \$15,000 Caine prize for his prison-diary story "Love Poems"
10. Russia's negotiators have found it hard to explain their country's murky and capricious business environment.

Key

1. I've lived here for ten years now.
Eg I still live here. I started 10 years ago.
2. When you've finished that, how about doing the dishes?
Finish and start two things
3. Inflation will have risen to 5% by the end of the year.
5% total and end of year
4. Lady Jane Grey had only been queen for a few days when she was deposed and executed.
Being queen for a few days and then being deposed and executed
5. I've been working at this for over an hour and I haven't finished yet. Time is running out.
Started thinking and now
6. I've been thinking over the problem and I think I have a solution.
Started thinking and now
7. I've never met anyone as rude as him before.
Meeting him and all of time of my life which includes now
8. Have you met Jane before, Ian? Jane, this is Ian.
Meeting Jane before and of time of Ian's life which includes now
9. A Nigerian writer, 33-year-old Helon Habila, has won the \$15,000 Caine prize for his prison-diary story "Love Poems"
Winning the prize and telling you now
10. Russia's negotiators have found it hard to explain their country's murky and capricious business environment.
Explaining and now