

Lesson Plan:

**Talking About
Experiences in
English
Using Present
Perfect and Past
Simple naturally in
conversation**

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Lesson Plan:

**Talking About Experiences
in English**

**Using Present Perfect and
Past Simple naturally in
conversation**

a ManWrites lesson plan

Overview

Level: A2–B1

Time: 60–90 minutes

Skills: Grammar · Speaking · Writing · Listening (optional if teacher reads models aloud)

Focus: Helping learners combine present perfect and past simple to talk about experiences clearly and confidently.

A. Warm-Up — Sharing Experiences (10 minutes)

This opening stage gets students talking about real-life experiences while naturally using the target language.

It activates background knowledge and builds comfort with the question ***“Have you ever...?”***

Write ***“Have you ever...?”*** on the board.

Brainstorm endings together (e.g. ***tried sushi, been abroad, met a celebrity***).

Put students in pairs or small groups.

They take turns asking and answering questions using present perfect and short past simple follow-ups.

Example

A – Have you ever tried sushi?

B – Yes, I have. I tried it in Tokyo last year.

Encourage natural follow-up questions (***When? Where? Who with? Did you like it?***).

If learners struggle, model two-part answers on the board
(Present Perfect + Past Simple).

Keep the pace lively — this stage is for fluency, not correction.

B. Noticing and Explanation (10–12 minutes)

This stage helps learners notice how English speakers combine the present perfect and past simple naturally in short texts.

Students identify the two tenses in context and begin to understand how they work together — the present perfect introduces an experience, and the past simple gives the story details.

Display or distribute the three model stories from the main article (***Travel, Food, Meeting People***), or use the new short stories provided below.

Ask students to underline or highlight all examples of the present perfect in one colour and the past simple in another.

Once finished, discuss the following questions as a class:

- When is each tense used?
- Which words signal each tense? (e.g. ever, never, last year, in 2019, two days ago)
- How does each story move from general experience to specific details?

Summarise on the board: Present Perfect = Headline (experience) / Past Simple = Details (time and story).

Story 1 – Travel Experience

I've been to Italy twice. The first time I went was with my parents when I was fifteen. We visited Rome and Venice and took hundreds of photos. The second time I went alone, and I spent most of my days exploring small cafés and old churches.

Story 2 – Food Experience

I've never cooked Japanese food, but I've eaten it many times. Last weekend I went to a sushi bar near my house. I tried a dish called takoyaki — little fried balls with octopus inside. It was delicious!

Story 3 – Learning Experience

I've learned a lot of new skills this year. I started an online photography course in January. I bought a second-hand camera and practised every day. After two months, I took pictures for my friend's wedding.

Reinforce the headline → details pattern visually on the board.

Highlight how each story begins with the present perfect to introduce an experience, then uses the past simple for time, action, and detail.

Encourage students to read one story aloud to notice rhythm and contractions (*I've, she's, they've*).

C. Grammar Focus (10 minutes)

Now that students have seen how both tenses appear naturally in stories, this stage focuses on the form and function of the two key verb patterns.

Present Perfect → for life experience (no time mentioned).

Past Simple → for finished events (time is clear or implied).

Write two example sentences on the board:

I've been to Japan twice.

I went to Japan in 2018.

Ask the class:

Which sentence talks about a general experience?

Which one gives a specific time?

Present a mini-table for clarity:

Present Perfect — have/has + past participle — *I've seen that film* — ever, never, already, yet, just

Past Simple — past form of the verb — *I saw it last night* — yesterday, last week, in 2020, two days ago

Practise contractions: I have → I've, she has → she's, they have → they've.

Drill short questions:

Have you ever...? / When did you...?

Contrast quiz:

Have you ever eaten sushi? 

Did you eat sushi last weekend? 

Have you eaten sushi last weekend? 

Mini Practice

Teacher asks: *Have you ever ridden a horse?*

Students answer: *Yes, I have. I rode one in Mongolia last year.*

This short stage is about clarity, contrast, and confidence.

If students struggle, highlight the rule:

finished time → past simple; no time → present perfect.

D. Controlled Practice (15 minutes)

Exercise 1 — Gap-Fill

Use the correct form (present perfect or past simple).

Have you ever (eat) _____ sushi?

I (go) _____ to the cinema last night.

She (just / finish) _____ her homework.

We (visit) _____ that museum three times.

He (not / see) _____ the film yet.

I (meet) _____ him at a party in 2019.

Exercise 2 — Correct the Mistakes

Each sentence has one mistake. Rewrite correctly.

I've gone to Italy last summer.

She hasn't finished her essay yesterday.

Did you ever ride a camel?

I've seen that movie last weekend.

He's never saw the ocean.

Exercise 3 — Sort the Time Phrases

Put the following into two boxes — **Present Perfect** and **Past Simple**.

ever · never · already · yet · just · yesterday · last week · two days ago · in 2020 · when I was a child

E. Semi-Controlled Practice (15 minutes)

Exercise 4 — “Headline → Details” Story Building

Choose one topic (travel · food · hobby · learning).

Write one headline sentence (present perfect).

Add two past simple sentences with details (time, place, actions).

Example

I’ve visited Vietnam twice. I went in 2019 and again in 2024. I stayed in Hanoi and took a cooking class.

Exercise 5 — Order the Story

Put the sentences in the best order and label each as **PP** (present perfect) or **PS** (past simple).

- A. We went last summer with friends.
- B. I’ve tried hiking a few times.
- C. The first time I went was in 2021.
- D. We climbed a mountain near my town.

Expected Order: B → C → A → D

F. Communicative Practice (15–20 minutes)

Exercise 6 — Partner Interview

In pairs, take turns asking “*Have you ever ...?*” questions.

If the answer is “Yes”, ask follow-up past simple questions (*When? Where? Who with?*).

Take notes on one interesting story to share later.

Exercise 7 — Experience Carousel

Post four topic signs around the room:

Travel • Food • Learning • People.

Students stand in pairs and talk for two minutes about that topic using both tenses, then rotate.

G. Writing Task (15 minutes or Homework)

Exercise 8 — My Most Memorable Experience

Write about an experience you'll never forget (120–150 words).

Introduction — Present Perfect headline

Details — Past Simple events

Reflection — What you learned or how you felt

Checklist

- Present perfect headline
- Past simple details
- Sequence words (First, Then, After that, Finally)
- At least one ever / never / just / already / yet

H. Review and Wrap-Up (5 minutes)

Quick Recap Quiz

Have you ever / yesterday met a celebrity?

I went / have gone to the doctor last Monday.

She's already / last year finished her report.

We haven't / didn't see that film yet.

He's been / gone to the bank — he'll be back soon.

Answers: ever · went · already · haven't · gone

Discussion

Ask: What's the difference between I've been to Paris and I went to Paris in 2018?

End with one final question:

Have you ever learned something new today?

Summary Table for Learners

Present Perfect — have/has + past participle — I've been to Japan — ever, never, just, already, yet

Past Simple — past form of verb — I went there in 2020 — yesterday, last week, in 2019, two days ago

Pattern — Headline → Details — I've been to Spain. I went there last summer.