

PRESENT PERFECT

Describing Past Events in Relation to the Present

UNIT GOALS

- Use the present perfect to understand and express past actions that are related to the present moment by time
- Use the present perfect to understand and express past actions that are related to the present moment by logical relationship or present result
- Understand and express meaning differences with present perfect progressive instead of present perfect tense

OPENING TASK

Identifying What Makes You Special

When American students apply to colleges and universities, they often have to write a personal essay about their individual character and achievements and explain what makes them different from the other people who are also applying to the school. Fill out the sample admissions application on the next page, and write a personal essay that identifies some of your characteristics, experiences, and achievements that might be of interest to a university admissions committee.

STEP 1

To get you started, here are the ideas that Aliona Fernandez used for her successful application to the North American Institute of International Studies. (Her personal essay has been reprinted in Exercise 1 on page 233.) For your essay identify at least one special characteristic, one experience that helped you develop that characteristic, and one achievement that this characteristic has enabled you to do.

	ALIONA FERNANDEZ	YOU
Characteristic	flexibility	
Experience	living overseas as a Peace Corps volunteer	
Achievement	she speaks other languages and understands different cultures	

STEP 2

Show your application and essay to another student and compare each of your special characteristics, experiences, and achievements. Decide whose essay would be most effective to use for a university application. Tell your opinion and your reasons to the rest of the class.



North American Institute of International Studies

Application for Admission

Applying for: _____ SPRING _____ SUMMER _____ FALL _____ WINTER 20 ____

Degree Objective: Undergraduate _____ Graduate _____

Major _____ Minor _____

Personal Data: Name _____

Address _____

Telephone _____ Birthdate _____

Sex _____ Ethnic Background _____

Educational Background:

List all secondary and postsecondary schools attended, including language programs.

Name and location of school Dates of attendance Degree granted GPA

Personal Essay / Writing Sample:

All applicants must provide a writing sample. On another sheet of paper, write at least 200 words on the following topic. It must be handwritten, and written *only* by the applicant.

What are some characteristics that make you different from other people you know?

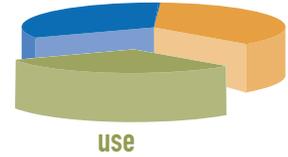
How have your experiences in life shaped you as a person? What are some achievements that you have accomplished that you feel particularly proud of?

Signature _____ Date _____

All applications must be accompanied by official transcripts in English, proof of finances, and a nonrefundable \$60 application fee.

FOCUS 1

Choosing Past Time Frame or Present Time Frame



We can use both past time frame and present time frame to talk about things that happened in the past.

PAST TIME FRAME	PRESENT TIME FRAME
Use past time frame (in the form of the simple past tense) to show that a past event has no direct, ongoing relationship to the present . The event was fully completed in the past or happened at a specific time in the past.	Use a present time frame (in the form of present perfect tense) to show that a past event is directly related to the present . The event happened in the past, but continues to influence the present in some way .
(a) I lived in Honduras as a very young child, but I don't remember much about it now.	(b) I have lived in four foreign countries, and as a result I am very aware of how cultural differences affect how we perceive reality.
(c) I started to fill out the application for the university, but I didn't finish it, because I realized I wouldn't be able to afford the tuition.	(d) I haven't finished the application for the university yet. I'm still working on the personal essay.

EXERCISE 1

Read the following personal essay written by a successful applicant to the North American Institute of International Studies. Underline the verb phrases and identify the tenses that are used. Then discuss these questions with a partner.

- Why did the author use present time in the first paragraph?
- Why did the author use past time in the second paragraph?
- Why did the author use present time in the third paragraph?

Personal Essay

by Aliona Fernandez



(1) One of the characteristics that makes me different from many people is my adaptability. (2) I am flexible and comfortable in new or unusual situations. (3) I think this is because I have had a lot of experience living in foreign countries. (4) This has given me a lot of opportunities to face unfamiliar situations and to learn about unfamiliar customs and beliefs.

(5) My first experience in a foreign country was as a Peace Corps volunteer. (6) I taught English in a small town in a rural area. (7) Life in my town was very simple. (8) Because there was no electricity and rather little contact with the outside world, my life was a lot like living in an earlier century.

(9) I have been to other countries since that first experience, and everywhere that I have traveled has been interesting and educational. (10) As a result of my

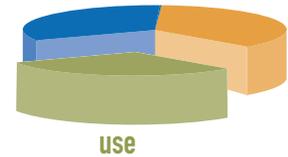
experiences in other countries, I speak other languages and understand other cultures.

(11) I have learned that relationships between people are very much the same, whether they have modern, busy lives, or old-fashioned, more peaceful lives. (12) I have learned to understand different ways of doing things and different ways of looking at the world.

(13) Most of all, I have learned that “new” doesn’t necessarily mean “better.” (14) My experiences have made me adaptable, and this adaptability has allowed me to understand other people and cultures.

FOCUS 2

Relationship to the Present: Still True (Present Perfect Tense) Versus No Longer True (Past Tense)



Past events relate to the present if they are still true at this time.

EXAMPLES	EXPLANATIONS
(a) I have lived in three foreign countries. I have learned how to adapt to the local culture.	Present Perfect Tense: Use the present perfect tense to show that something is still true now .
(b) I lived in Honduras for three years. I ate pupusas every day for lunch.	Past Tense: Use the past tense to talk about something that is no longer true now .

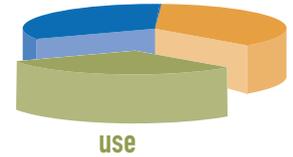
EXERCISE 2

Choose past tense or present perfect tense for the verbs in parentheses. More than one answer may be correct, so be prepared to explain why you chose the form you did. The first one has been done for you.

Bambang Soetomo (1) came (come) to the United States last January to get a degree in mechanical engineering. Since he (2) _____ (be) in the United States, he (3) _____ (have) many new experiences. At home in Jakarta, servants (4) _____ (cook) all his food. But here in the United States, Bambang (5) _____ (have) to prepare food for himself. In Indonesia, a lot of his university classes (6) _____ (require) the ability to memorize large amounts of information. But here, Bambang (7) _____ (find) that memorization is not considered to be a very important skill in many of his classes. Of course, he (8) _____ (be) ready for obvious differences in things like food and social customs, but he (9) _____ (not/adjust) to the subtle differences. He (10) _____ (learn) that knowing about differences and dealing with them are two different things. In fact, he (11) _____ (be) rather homesick. In Jakarta he (12) _____ (have) a large group of friends, but here in the States he (13) _____ (meet) only a few other Indonesian students, and none of them are in his department. When he (14) _____ (be) planning his trip to America, he (15) _____ (plan) to go home for a vacation after his sophomore year, but he (16) _____ (change) his mind since he (17) _____ (get) here. He (18) _____ (speak) with his father about the possibility of coming home during his first summer vacation. His father (19) _____ (not decide) whether that's a good idea or not.

FOCUS 3

Relationship to the Present: Until Now



Present perfect is used to describe things that began in the past but continue up to the present moment.

EXAMPLES	EXPLANATIONS
(a) I have visited Paris over a dozen times . (b) I' ve eaten snake meat once , but I'll never do it again!	Use present perfect to describe: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the number of times something has happened
(c) Your teacher has just left her office. Maybe you can catch her if you hurry to the parking lot. (d) We've just been talking about your application. Can we ask you a few questions?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> very recent events with <i>just</i>
(e) I' ve known Aliona since we were in high school. (f) I' ve never eaten snake meat. Have you ever tried it?	Use present perfect in sentences: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> with <i>ever</i>, <i>never</i>, or <i>since</i>

EXERCISE 3

Work with a partner. Take turns asking each other these questions. Ask at least ten questions. You can use the suggested topics or make up questions of your own.

- Have you ever . . . (ridden a horse, been in love, seen a flying saucer . . .)
- How many times have you . . . (eaten Chinese food, taken the TOEFL® Test*, driven a motorcycle . . .)
- Name three things you have never done, but would like to do.
- Name three things you have done that you don't want to do again.

Then tell the rest of the class about your partner. The class should decide who has asked the most interesting or unusual questions.

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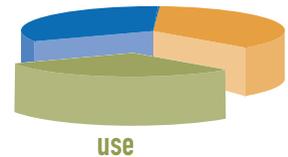
EXERCISE 4

Choose past tense or present perfect tense for the verbs in parentheses. More than one answer may be possible. The first sentence has been done for you as an example.

My friend Bob is a very happy man. He ^{has} just (1) found out (find out) that he (2) _____ (receive) a full scholarship to North American Institute of International Studies. He (3) _____ (apply) to several graduate programs in the last few years, but he never (4) _____ (get) any scholarship offers until six months ago, when he (5) _____ (be offered) a partial scholarship to North Dakota State. Since then, apparently, the suggestions I gave him about improving his personal essay (6) _____ (change) his chances. He (7) _____ (get) two other offers from his second- and third-choice schools. Most of the scholarship offers (8) _____ (be) small until last week, when he (9) _____ (get) the letter from NAIIS offering him free tuition plus room and board. I wonder if he (10) _____ (think about) doing something nice for the person who helped him with his essay.

FOCUS 4

Relationship to the Present: Present Result (Present Perfect Tense)



Another common way that past events relate to the present is if the past event **continues to affect the present situation in some way**. Use present perfect tense to describe past events that cause a result in the present.

The present result can be stated directly.

PAST ACTION	STATED PRESENT RESULT
(a) I have already seen that movie,	so I suggest we go see a different one.
(b) He has been wasting so much money	that I don't think we should give him any more.
(c) I have always felt that teachers were underpaid,	so I think we should suggest that our teacher ought to get a raise.

The present result can be implied.

PAST ACTION	IMPLIED PRESENT RESULT
(d) You have spilled juice all over my new tablecloth!	The tablecloth is dirty.
(e) John has obviously forgotten about our meeting.	He is not at the meeting.

The present result can also be the speaker's/writer's attitude.

NOT CONNECTED TO THE PRESENT (PAST TENSE)	CONNECTED TO THE PRESENT (PRESENT PERFECT TENSE)	EXPLANATIONS
(f) Did you find the article you were looking for?	(g) Have you found the article you were looking for? Because if not, I think I know where you can find it.	The event is connected to the present in the speaker's mind.
(h) The White House released new figures yesterday concerning the economy.	(i) The White House has released new figures on the economy in the last quarter. These figures show that imports continue to exceed exports by more than 20%.	Reporters often introduce news stories with the present perfect tense to emphasize the connection with the present.
(j) The historian Toynbee often observed that history repeats itself.	(k) The historian Toynbee has observed that history repeats itself, and I believe that he is correct.	A writer may mention a past event that has a connection to a point she or he is about to make.

EXERCISE 5

Choose the sentence that reflects the most logical continuation of the ideas expressed in the first sentence, based on the tense used in the first sentence. Both sentences are formed correctly.

1. I have told you that I don't like the color green.
 - a. My brother didn't like that color either.
 - b. So why did you buy me a sweater in that color?

2. Jeff met Matt at a party.
 - a. They soon became the best of friends.
 - b. They share an apartment in San Francisco.
3. Bambang Soetomo arrived in America about eight months ago.
 - a. He has been adjusting to American life ever since.
 - b. He is living by himself in an apartment.
4. I have been trying to get in touch with my math professor since last week.
 - a. I didn't do well on the last exam.
 - b. Whenever I go to her office, she isn't there.
5. I don't think that Denise likes Peter very much.
 - a. Have you ever noticed that she avoids looking at him when she speaks?
 - b. Did she say anything about her feelings to you at the meeting last week?

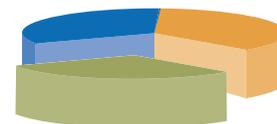
EXERCISE 6

Discuss these questions about the short passages below with a partner and compare your ideas with those of other students.

- Why do you think the speaker chose to use the present perfect tense instead of simple past tense in these sentences?
 - How is the past action related to the present: by time relationship, by present result, or by a combination of both?
1. Scientists have discovered a number of interesting similarities between the atmosphere on Earth and on Titan, one of the moons of Jupiter. They have found significant concentrations of water vapor and other chemicals common on Earth. As a result, they are hoping to send another space probe to Titan later this year.
 2. If I have told you once, I've told you a hundred times: I hate broccoli!
 3. Guess what? We've been invited to Liz's wedding. What should we get her for a gift?
 4. Conservative politicians have often stated that welfare payments to poor families do not help reduce long-term poverty, but recent statistics show that this may not be true.
 5. Shakespeare's reputation as a psychologist has grown in recent years. His plays have always reflected a deep understanding of human motivations.
 6. Has Jill found a summer job? I was talking with my aunt, and she said her office might need a temporary computer programmer.

FOCUS 5

Present Perfect Progressive Tense



USE

EXAMPLES	EXPLANATIONS
<p>(a) I have been living with my parents, but I hope to move out once I am accepted to your university. (temporary)</p> <p>(b) I have lived with my parents since they became ill and needed me to help around the house. (permanent)</p>	<p>Use the present perfect progressive tense (<i>have/has been</i> + verb + <i>-ing</i>) instead of present perfect to describe something that is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • temporary rather than permanent
<p>(c) I have been talking to everyone about what to put in my essay, but I don't have a good plan yet. Do you have any ideas? (repeated occurrence)</p> <p>(d) I have thought about the essay, and I have a good idea of what to write. (single occurrence)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • repeated rather than a single occurrence
<p>(e) I have been working constantly on my application for the last three hours. I don't know when I'll finish! (continuous)</p> <p>(f) I have tried several times to work on my application, but I keep getting interrupted. (repeated)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continuous rather than repeated or recurring
<p>(g) I have been writing my personal statement. I still have to proofread it and staple it together. (uncompleted)</p> <p>(h) I have written my personal statement. Let's go celebrate! (completed)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uncompleted rather than completed
<p>(i) Living in foreign countries has required a lot of flexibility.</p> <p>(j) NOT: Living in foreign countries has been requiring a lot of flexibility.</p>	<p>Remember that nonprogressive verbs do not occur with the progressive aspect even when they refer to continuous states.</p>

EXERCISE 7

Choose the correct form, present perfect or present perfect progressive, for the verbs. More than one answer may be possible.

1. I (a) _____ (read) about the development of early forms of photography, and I (b) _____ (learn) some very interesting facts about it. I would like to continue my research next semester.
2. That baby _____ (cry) constantly since we got here. I wish its parents would do something to make it be quiet!
3. Bob's brother _____ (resent) his getting that full scholarship ever since he heard the news.
4. I _____ (try) to explain that for ten minutes. Aren't you listening?
5. I _____ (try) to explain that every way I know how. I give up!
6. I _____ (work) on this problem all afternoon. It's time for a break.
7. Aliona _____ (expect) the admissions committee to call about her application. That's why she wants to stay home this afternoon.
8. Bob _____ (tell) the committee that he doesn't want to accept the scholarship unless it includes room and board.
9. The college (a) _____ (try) to contact Bob about his scholarship. They (b) _____ (call) at least five or six times.
10. Bob (a) _____ (dream) going to NIIS ever since he read an article about their graduate program in public health. He (b) _____ (become) an expert on it.

EXERCISE 8

Decide whether the verbs in parentheses should use simple present, present progressive, present perfect, present perfect progressive, or the past tense. Write the correct verb form in the blanks. More than one answer may be correct.

Bambang Soetomo (1) _____ (speak) English quite fluently. I wonder where he (2) _____ (learn) it. He (3) _____ (study) mechanical engineering. He (4) _____ (plan) to go to graduate school once he (5) _____ (get) his B.S. degree. Bambang (6) _____ (live) by himself for the last few months. But he (7) _____ (think) about getting a roommate. He (8) _____ (miss) his friends back home a great deal, and this (9) _____ (affect) his studies. He (10) _____ (hope) that his father will let him come home during the summer, but his father (11) _____ (not decide) yet.

Use Your English

ACTIVITY



speaking

Find out what important changes your classmates have made in their lives.

■ STEP 1

Interview three classmates. Ask them the following:

- Have you changed any habits or routines recently?
- What kind of changes did you make?
- Why have you made the changes?
- How have the changes affected you?

■ STEP 2

Based on the changes your group has experienced, decide together whether you agree that changes in life are generally for the better. Present your group's ideas and reasons to the rest of the class.

ACTIVITY



speaking/listening

Experts in cross-cultural communication have found that North American culture tends to value individualism. As a result, many young children are taught to look for ways that they are different from other people. Most Americans can easily identify several personal experiences and characteristics that make them unique. What about people from other cultures?

■ STEP 1

Interview three or four people from various cultures and ask them these questions:

- What experiences have you had that most other people haven't?
- What things make you different from most other people?

■ STEP 2

Of the people you interviewed, who was able to think of the greatest number of individual differences?

ACTIVITY

3

speaking

How do North Americans, as a group, compare to the students you interviewed for Activities 1 and 2?

- **STEP 1** Work with three different students than those you interviewed in Activity 1. Two of you should interview three or four North Americans, asking the questions that you used for Activity 1. The second pair should ask the questions you used for Activity 2.
- **STEP 2** Compare the responses of the North Americans to the responses of the students you interviewed in those activities.
- **STEP 3** Discuss these questions with your group and summarize your ideas for the rest of the class.
 - Were there differences between the answers given by North Americans and those of your classmates?
 - Were North Americans able to identify their individual differences more readily than people from other cultures?
 - Did North Americans feel differently about change than people from other cultures?
 - What do the similarities and differences between the answers of various cultural groups tell you about cultural differences?

ACTIVITY

4

listening/speaking



CD Tracks
20, 21

Which of these two people is most qualified to be accepted for admission to the North American Institute of International Studies?

- **STEP 1** Listen to the interviews with each candidate. Using the chart on the next page, identify what the candidates say about their most important accomplishment, their background and experience, and their special abilities.
- **STEP 2** Compare your chart with another student's, and listen to the interviews a second time to make sure you have heard all the important information.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	CANDIDATE 1 NAME: _____ PROGRAM: _____	CANDIDATE 2 NAME: _____ PROGRAM: _____
What makes you different from other candidates?		
What relevant experience do you have?		
What is an achievement that you're proud of?		

- **STEP 3** You and your partner should decide which student is a better candidate for admission. Tell your choice and your reasons to the rest of the class.

ACTIVITY 5 research on the web

- **STEP 1** Use an Internet search engine such as Google® or Yahoo® and enter the term “personal essay”. You should find listed a number of Web sites of universities and other institutions that provide advice and guidance on writing personal essays for college applications. Visit at least three of these sites and summarize at least five pieces of advice that they provide to prospective applicants. Present that advice to the rest of the class.



- **STEP 2** Use the advice you find to revise the personal essay you wrote for the Opening Task of this unit. What changes did you make?

ACTIVITY 6 reflection

Bring in the front page of a daily newspaper and examine the articles with a partner or in a group. Find examples of sentences written in present time and past time. In what tense are headlines usually written? In what tense are the introductory paragraphs usually written? In what tense is the main part of the article generally written? Can you find a pattern? Why do you think the reporter chose one time frame rather than another? Discuss your ideas with your partner or group, and then present them to the rest of the class.