

## Life experiences by Shirley Jones

**Age:** Teenagers / Adults  
**Level:** Intermediate–upper intermediate  
**Time:** 60–90 mins  
**Objective:** To practise using the present perfect and past simple to talk about life experiences  
**Key skills:** Grammar, speaking  
**Materials:** One copy of the worksheet per student

**Note:** Students should already be familiar with the present perfect to talk about general life experiences and the past simple to talk about specific life events.

### Procedure

#### Warmer

- Write three sentences on the board and ask students if they can explain the differences between them. Leave space between them as you will be writing additional information.
  - Sam has been to San Francisco.
  - Sam has gone to San Francisco
  - Sam went to San Francisco.

#### Grammar focus

##### Present perfect and past simple – *been* and *gone*

- Ask students to identify the tenses. They should already know sentences 1 and 2 are present perfect and sentence 3 is past simple.
- Ask students to identify the infinitive of the underlined verbs. Answer: *go*. At this point, you may receive puzzled looks from some students. You can ask them to refer to the list of irregular verbs on the worksheet or to their coursebook.
- Ask them to look at the past participle for the verb *be* (*been*). Ask them to look at the past participle of the verb *go* (*been* or *gone*). Don't provide any explanations yet!
- After sentence 1, write some examples of non-specific time expressions (for example, *before*, *in his life*). Elicit from students or explain that the present perfect is often used to talk about general life experiences, without providing specific information such as when, with who, etc.
- Before sentence 2, write the question 'Where's Sam?' Then, after the original sentence 'Sam has

gone to San Francisco', add 'but he'll be back next week.'

- Where's Sam?* Sam has gone to San Francisco, *but he'll be back next week*.

Students should already be familiar with the use of the present perfect to describe a past event that is still true in the present moment. Ask students if Sam still in San Francisco? Answer: yes. Elicit from students or explain that if someone visits a place but hasn't yet returned, they have *gone* there. If they have visited a place and then returned, they have *been* there. *Been* is used to describe completed visits, as well as general life experiences.

- Gestures can help to clarify the difference in meaning between *been* and *gone*. Point in one direction to indicate *gone*. Make circular movements with your arms to indicate *been* (go and come back). If you have a monolingual class, translations can help provide clarity.
- After sentence 3, write some examples of specific time expressions (for example, *last year*, *five years ago*). By intermediate level, students should already be very familiar with the past simple to talk about completed events in the past with no connection to the present.

#### *Ever* and *never*

- Write the following on the board and ask the class the question:
 

Have you ever been to San Francisco?

and then write some possible answers.

*Yes, I have.*  
*No, I haven't.*  
*No, I haven't ever been to San Francisco.*  
*No, I have never been to San Francisco.*  
*No, never.*
- Ask students if they can explain the difference between *ever* and *never* (bearing in mind that, in some languages, they are translated using the

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same word). Both are used to ask and answer questions about general life experiences.

- *Ever* is used in questions and negatives to mean *in your life*.

Have you **ever** (*in your life*) been to San Francisco?

No, I haven't **ever** (*in my life*) been to San Francisco. (Note: negative + *ever*)

- If something is not part of your life experience, you can use *never* to mean not *in my life*.

No, I have **never** been to San Francisco. (Note: positive + *never*)

- *Never* can also be used for single-word answers.

Never.

- You can also tell students that *ever* is used ...

- after *nobody* and *nothing*;  
**Nobody** has **ever** been there before.  
**Nothing** like this has **ever** happened before.
- after *It's the first time*.  
**It's the first time** I have **ever** eaten sushi.

### Speaking practice – experiences

1. Hand out the worksheet and do activity 1 together with the class, completing the spaces with *ever*, *never*, *been* or *gone*.

#### Key:

1. *ever been*; *never*; 2. *gone*; 3. *gone*; 4. *been*;  
5. *never been*; 6. *been*; 7. *ever been*; 8. *ever*; 9. *ever*;  
10. *ever*

2. Divide the class into pairs. Ask them to choose a prompt from activity 2 on the worksheet and ask their partner a question with *Have you ever ...?* Encourage the class to ask each other follow-up questions for more specific information, using the past simple.

- A. Have you ever been in a hot-air balloon?
- B. Yes, I have.
- A. Wow! That must have been an amazing experience. Where did you do that?
- B. In Kenya while I was on safari in the Masai

Mara game reserve.

- A. Did you enjoy it?
- etc ...*

3. When you are sure students are comfortable with *Have you ever ...?*, write this question on the board:

When was the last time you went to ...?

(Complete the question with a place you are sure your students have already been.)

Write down some possible answers.

The last time I went to London was ...

last year.

three years ago.

when I was a child.

Ask students to identify the tense (answer: past simple) and why this tense is used (answer: the last time – a specific moment in the past).

4. Write another question where you are confident the answer will be negative.

When was the last time you went to China?

I have never been to China.

Ask students to identify the tense in the answer and to explain why it is used. When something is not part of our life experience, we use the present perfect. Up to this point in my life, I haven't been to China but I do not exclude the possibility that I may do so in the future. If students are still perplexed, you could write these responses in the past simple and ask why they are used.

(An old man in a nursing home) I never went to China.

(Answer: He is excluding the possibility of further travel in his lifetime.)

When my grandfather was alive, he never went to China.

(He has passed away, therefore further travel is now impossible.)

5. Circulate among the pairs of students while they tackle activity 3 to ensure they are using the structures correctly. Encourage them to ask follow-up questions.

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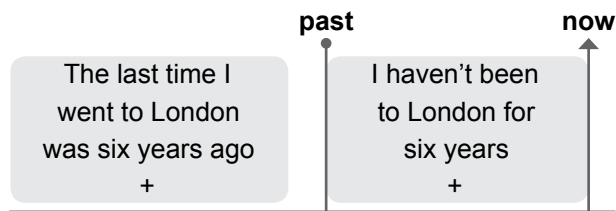
### Grammar focus – for and since

1. When you are sure your students are comfortable with this structure, draw the following simple timeline below the question.

When was the last time you went to London?



Then, add sentence B. It may be helpful to write the current year and a previous year to represent present and past.



2. Explain to students that sentences A and B mean the same. Ask them to compare the tenses. Why is sentence A in the past simple and sentence B in the present perfect? Why is sentence A positive and sentence B negative?
3. Explain to students that the shaded area (sentence B on the worksheet) represents the connection between a point in the past (2010) and the present (2016). Therefore, we use the present perfect. The last time I visited London was in 2010 (+). From that point in 2010 to the present moment, I have not visited London (-).
4. Remind students of the difference between adverbs *for* (to speak about a period of time) and *since* (to speak about the point in time when the action commenced).
5. As they complete activity 4, monitor students' use of the structure very closely, as they are likely to find it awkward at the beginning.

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### Grammar focus – *ever, never, been, gone*

- We use the **present perfect** to talk about our **general life experiences** when we **don't specify** a time.  
I've **been** to San Francisco but I **haven't been** to Los Angeles.
- When we **specify** the time, we use the **past simple**.  
I **went** to San Francisco in 2010.
- The adverbs **ever** and **never** are often used to ask and answer questions about **general life experiences**.  
Have you **ever** been to San Francisco?  
No, **never**. or I've **never** been to San Francisco.
- Ever** is also used after **nobody** and **nothing**.  
**Nobody** has **ever** been there before.  
**Nothing** like this has **ever** happened before.
- It is very common to use **been** (the past participle of *go*) to talk about **general life experiences**.  
I've **been** to the United States three times before.
- Remember the difference between **been** and **gone** (both past participles of *go*). **Been** is used to describe **completed** visits. If you have visited a place and then returned you have **been** there. If someone visits a place but has not returned, they have **gone** there. When you ask someone about their life experiences, use **been**:  
Have you ever **been** to the United States? – Yes, I have.
- Conversations about experiences often start with a general question in the present perfect but the past simple is used to ask for more specific information (who, why, when, etc).
 

A. Have you <b>ever been</b> to the United States?	<b>PRESENT PERFECT</b>
B. Yes, I have. Several times.	<b>PRESENT PERFECT</b>
A. When <b>did</b> you <b>go</b> ?	<b>PAST SIMPLE</b>
B. I went last year, in 2010 and in 2006.	<b>PAST SIMPLE</b>

### 1 Complete the spaces with *ever, never, been* or *gone*.

- Have you \_\_\_\_\_ in a hot air balloon? No, \_\_\_\_\_.
- She's \_\_\_\_\_ to Rome to visit her grandmother but she'll be back soon.
- My sister's not at home this evening. She's \_\_\_\_\_ out.
- You're very late! Where have you \_\_\_\_\_?
- My son's \_\_\_\_\_ to London.
- The fridge is full. My wife's obviously \_\_\_\_\_ to the supermarket.
- It's amazing. She's 60 and this is the first time she's \_\_\_\_\_ in an aeroplane.
- Nobody has \_\_\_\_\_ spoken to me like that before!
- I'm really disappointed. I haven't \_\_\_\_\_ seen a solar eclipse before.
- This town is so boring! Nothing interesting has \_\_\_\_\_ happened here.

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### Speaking practice – experiences

#### 2 Have you ever ...?

Read the dialogue below. Then, in pairs, ask and answer questions using Have you ever ...? and the prompts below (or your own ideas). If you don't remember all the irregular past participles, refer to the last two pages of the worksheet.

<p><b>A</b></p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 20px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> <p>Have you ever been in a hot air balloon?</p> </div>	<p><b>B</b></p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 20px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> <p>Yes, I have.</p> </div>	<p>OR</p>	<p><b>C</b></p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 20px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> <p>No, never.</p> </div>
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#### Prompts:

read a novel in English	meet someone famous	eat curry	forget to pay the bill in a restaurant
be on radio or TV	receive a gift you hated	make a pizza from scratch	sing karaoke
go to Africa	win a prize in a competition	go snowboarding	fall asleep on the train
break a bone	stay in a five-star hotel	take a selfie on your phone	dream you could fly

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### Speaking practice – experiences

#### 3 When was the last time ...?

Read the dialogue below. Then, in pairs, ask and answer questions using the prompts below (or your own ideas).

<p><b>A</b></p> <p><b>When was the last time</b> you went to the US?</p>	<p><b>B</b></p> <p><b>The last time</b> I went to the US was six years ago.</p>	<p><b>OR</b></p>	<p><b>C</b></p> <p>I've never been to the US.</p>
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**Note:**

- When you ask someone about **the last time**, you are referring to a **specific moment** in the past. Therefore, the **past simple** is used.
- If something is **not part of your life experience**, the adverb **never** and the **present perfect** are used.

**Continue the conversation by asking your partner for more information.**

<p><b>A</b></p> <p>That's interesting. Who did you go with?</p>	<p><b>B</b></p> <p>I went with an organised tour group.</p>
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**Prompts:**

go abroad	eat pizza	swim in the sea	drink champagne
see a good film	try a new hobby	go to the theatre	sleep more than eight hours
go to a wedding	phone your ... (parents, best friend, etc)	lose something important	go out for dinner
buy a new mobile phone	be ill	write a letter (not email or text)	get a present

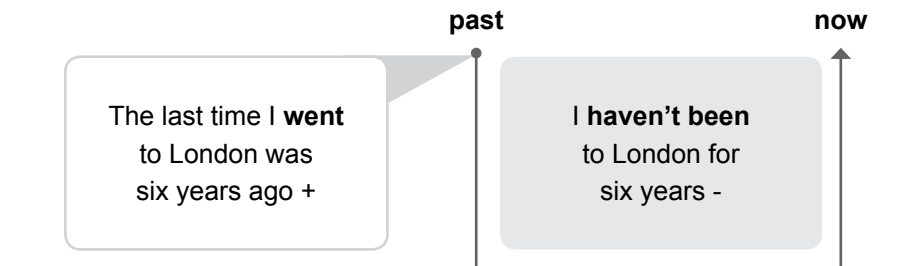


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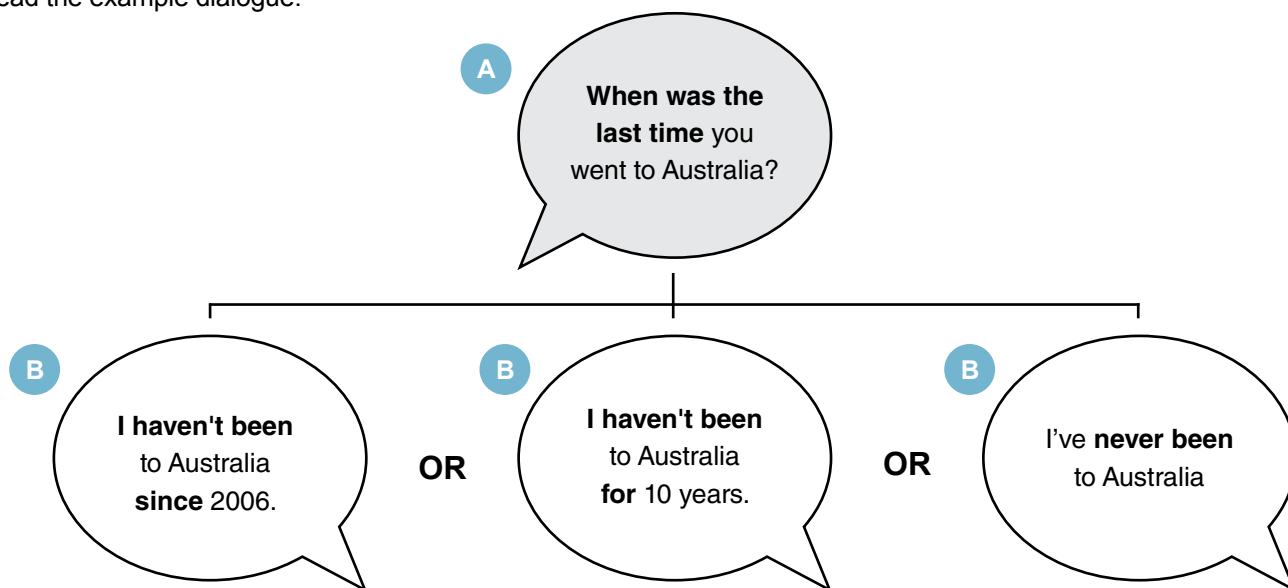
### Grammar focus – *for* and *since*

I haven't been ... *for* / *since* ...

An alternative way to answer the question When was the last time ...? is with a negative form of the present perfect.



Read the example dialogue.



Note the use of *for* and *since* with the present perfect.

- **for + period of time**  
 I haven't been to Australia **for** ten years.  
 I haven't been to Australia **for** ages / a very long time.
- **since + a point in time (to show when something started)**  
 I haven't been to Australia **since** 2006.  
 I haven't been to Australia **since** I was a child.

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**4 Using the prompts from activity 3 (or your own ideas), answer the question *When was the last time ...?* using *I haven't ... + for /since*.**

**Irregular verbs – be and go**

infinitive	past simple	past participle	infinitive	past simple	past participle
be	was/were	been	fly	flew	flown
become	became	become	forget	forgot	forgotten
begin	began	begun	forgive	forgave	forgiven
bend	bent	bent	freeze	froze	frozen
bet	bet	bet	get	got	got
bite	bit	bitten	give	gave	given
blow	blew	blown	go	went	gone/been
break	broke	broken	grow	grew	grown
bring	brought	brought	hang	hanged/hung	hung
build	built	built	have	had	had
burn	burned/burnt	burnt	hear	heard	heard
burst	burst	burst	hide	hid	hidden
buy	bought	bought	hit	hit	hit
can	could	(been able)	hold	held	held
catch	caught	caught	hurt	hurt	hurt
choose	chose	chosen	keep	kept	kept
come	came	come	kneel	knelt	knelt
cost	cost	cost	know	knew	known
cut	cut	cut	lay	laid	laid
deal	dealt	dealt	lead	led	led
dig	dug	dug	learn	learnt	learnt
do	did	done	leave	left	left
draw	drew	drawn	lend	lent	lent
dream	dreamed/ dreamt	dreamt	let	let	let
drink	drank	drunk	lie	lay	lain
drive	drove	driven	light	lit	lit
eat	ate	eaten	lose	lost	lost
fall	fell	fallen	make	made	made
feed	fed	fed	mean	meant	meant
feel	felt	felt	meet	met	met
fight	fought	fought	must	(had to)	(had to)
find	found	found	pay	paid	paid
fit	fit	fit	put	put	put
read	read	read	spell	spelled/spelt	spelt
ride	rode	ridden	spend	spent	spent
ring	rang	rung	spill	spilt/spilled	spilt/spilled



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<b>rise</b>	rose	risen	<b>split</b>	split	split
<b>run</b>	ran	run	<b>spoil</b>	spoiled/spoilt	spoilt
<b>say</b>	said	said	<b>spread</b>	spread	spread
<b>see</b>	saw	seen	<b>stand</b>	stood	stood
<b>sell</b>	sold	sold	<b>steal</b>	stole	stolen
<b>send</b>	sent	sent	<b>stick</b>	stuck	stuck
<b>set</b>	set	set	<b>swell</b>	swelled	swollen
<b>shake</b>	shook	shaken	<b>swim</b>	swam	swum
<b>shine</b>	shone	shone	<b>take</b>	took	taken
<b>shoot</b>	shot	shot	<b>teach</b>	taught	taught
<b>show</b>	showed	shown	<b>tear</b>	tore	torn
<b>shrink</b>	shrank	shrunk	<b>tell</b>	told	told
<b>shut</b>	shut	shut	<b>think</b>	thought	thought
<b>sing</b>	sang	sung	<b>throw</b>	threw	thrown
<b>sink</b>	sank	sunk	<b>understand</b>	understood	understood
<b>sit</b>	sat	sat	<b>wake</b>	woke	woken
<b>sleep</b>	slept	slept	<b>wear</b>	wore	worn
<b>slide</b>	slid	slid	<b>win</b>	won	won
<b>smell</b>	smelled/smelt	smelt	<b>write</b>	wrote	written
<b>speak</b>	spoke	spoken			