

UNIT 8 – HUMAN RIGHTS

I. THE SIMPLE PAST & THE PRESENT PERFECT

Look at the following sentence from the lesson, ‘Jamaican Fragment.’

The dark boy **ran** inside.

Now compare this sentence with the following sentence.

The dark boy **has run** inside.

Both the sentences express a past action.

But in the first sentence the speaker is interested in the action itself whereas in the second sentence the speaker is thinking of the effect of the past action on the present.

The first sentence is in the **simple past tense** and the second sentence is in the **present perfect**.

Uses of the simple past tense:

1. The simple past is used to refer to past actions or events.
 - Examples: a) He passed his examination in 2013.
 - I visited Delhi last month.
 - Raju met his friend yesterday.
2. The simple past form can also be used to refer to the present time. This is a special use of the simple past form with verbs like want, wonder, hope, think to make an utterance more polite or tactful.
 - Examples: a) I wanted to discuss my proposal with you, madam.
 - I wondered if I could discuss my proposal with you, sir.
 - I thought of discussing my proposal with you, sir.
 - I hoped to discuss my proposal with you, sir.

Other Uses of the Simple Past Form

1. After the conditional if to indicate tentativeness (hypothetical)
 - e.g., If I were the Prime Minister, I would provide free education at all levels.
 - After it's time, would rather, wish e.g. It's 10 o'clock---it's time you went to bed.
 - In reported speech e.g. I asked you what the time was.

The Present Perfect

The present perfect (has/have + Verb in the past participle form) refers to actions in the past which have no definite time reference.

The present perfect in English is used in the following three situations:

1. The present perfect tense is often used to talk about past actions and events which are completely finished. However, instead of the simple past, the present perfect is used if the action has current relevance, that is, it is related to the speaker's experience.

In this case even though the actions took place in the past, they are still with the speaker, as part of his/her experience and knowledge. This use of the present perfect is therefore also called the experiential use of the present perfect.

- e.g., I have seen the Taj Mahal. (Meaning: I know the Taj Mahal. It is still fresh in my memory.) (Contrast: I saw the Taj Mahal two years ago.)
2. To indicate an action/situation which began in the past and which has continued up to the present moment, i.e. the moment when we are speaking, the present perfect tense is used.
 - e.g., I have lived in Hyderabad for 10 years. (Meaning: I started living in Hyderabad 10 years ago and I am still living in Hyderabad.)

If you wish to state that you still continue to live in Hyderabad you should say, "I have been living in Hyderabad for 10 years". This use of

the present perfect is also known as its linking use as it links the past with the present.

3. The present perfect is also used to refer to past actions/events whose results are seen in the present, i.e., when there is evidence in the present for some action/event that happened in the past. Hence, it is also called the evidential use of the present perfect. This is called resultative past.
 - e.g., It has rained! (Evidence - Look! The ground is wet.)

The following examples make the difference clear:

1. I saw the film, Gandhi last March. (Here the speaker is calling attention to the action of seeing and to the time when it happened.)
2. I have seen the film, Gandhi. (Here the speaker is not saying when he saw the film. He is calling attention to the fact that he is now a person with personal experience of the film or someone who can tell us about it.)
3. I cut my finger when I was sharpening the pencil. (Nothing is said about any result now.)
4. I have cut my finger (and it is bleeding now.) The simple past is often used with adverbs of past time (e.g., yesterday, two months ago, in June, in 1965, during the war).
5. Sometimes it is also used to refer to present time or future time actions.
 - e.g., 1. Sir, may I come in. I wanted to talk to you.
 - If you left for Delhi tomorrow, when would you return?

The present perfect is never used with adverbs of past time.

You should not say, for example, 'She has gone to Hyderabad yesterday'. Say either 'She went to Hyderabad yesterday', if you are interested in the action and in the time when it happened, or 'She has gone to Hyderabad', if you wish to convey the idea that she is not in the town now.

The present perfect can be used with adverbs of present time

(e.g., today, this morning, this week, this month).

- Ex. I have seen Raju this week.

The present perfect is also used with just, recently, yet, already, never, ever, often, so far, etc.

- They have just gone.
- Has Anirudh left yet?

Read the following sentences. Complete the conversations with the appropriate forms of the verbs. Then say why you chose simple past/present perfect forms.

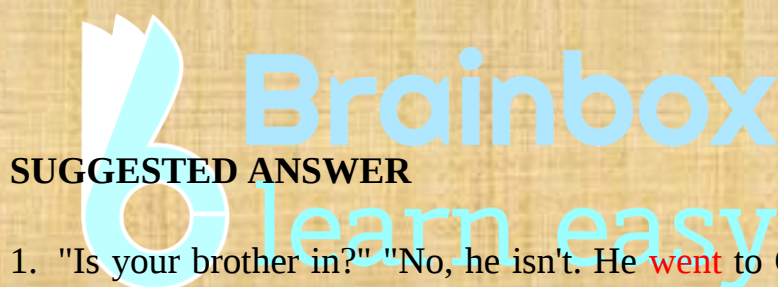
1. "Is your brother in?" "No, he isn't. He _____ (go) to Chennai." "When _____ he _____ (go) to Chennai?" "Yesterday."
2. "I _____ (lose) my pencil. _____ you _____ (see) it anywhere?" "No, I _____. When _____ you last _____ (use) the pencil?" "I _____ (use) it when I was in the class." "Perhaps you _____ (leave) it in the class."
3. A: _____ Madhu _____ (not arrive) yet?
B: No, he _____.
C: But he _____ (arrive) already!
B: _____ you _____ (talk) to him?
C: No, I _____. I merely _____ (see) him.
B: That cannot be Madhu. He may have been somebody else.
4. _____ you _____ (call) me, mother?
B: Yes, I _____. _____ you _____ (see) my diary today?

I _____ (put) it on the table last night. I
 _____ (look) all over the house for it. But I
 _____ (not, find) it anywhere.

A: I _____ (see) it on the table this morning, if I
 remember right.

Maybe father _____ (take) it with him by mistake.

5. "Do you know Mrs. Geetha?" "Yes, I do. I
 _____ (know) her for nearly four years. It
 _____ (be) at a High School that I first
 _____ (see) her in 2009. I _____ (work) with
 her for several years. Recently we _____ (meet) at the
 wedding of a mutual friend of us."



SUGGESTED ANSWER

- "Is your brother in?" "No, he isn't. He **went** to Chennai." "When **did** he **go** to Chennai?" "Yesterday."
- "I **lost** my pencil. **Have** you **seen** it anywhere?" "No, I **haven't**. When **did** you last **use** the pencil?" "I **used** it when I was in the class." "Perhaps you **have left** it in the class."
- A: **Has** Madhu **not arrived** yet?
 B: No, he **hasn't**.
 C: But he **has** already **arrived**!
 B: **Did** you **talk** to him?
 C: No, I **haven't**. I merely **saw** him.
 B: That cannot be Madhu. He may have been somebody else.
- Did** you **call** me, mother?

B: Yes, I **did**. **Have** you **seen** my diary today? I **put** it on the table last night. I **have looked** all over the house for it. But I **did not find** it anywhere.

A: I **saw** it on the table this morning, if I remember right. Maybe father **has taken** it with him by mistake.

5. "Do you know Mrs. Geetha?"

"Yes, I **do**. I **have known** her for nearly four years. It **was** at High School that I first **saw** her in 2009. I **have worked** with her for several years. Recently we **met** at the wedding of a mutual friend of us."

II. PUNCTUATION: HYPHEN (-) AND DASH (—)

Look at the following sentence paying attention to the use of the hyphen and the dash.

1. The other little fellow was smaller, but also sturdy — he was white, with hazel eyes and **light-brown** hair.
2. 'He was definitely a little Jamaican — a strong little Jamaican.'

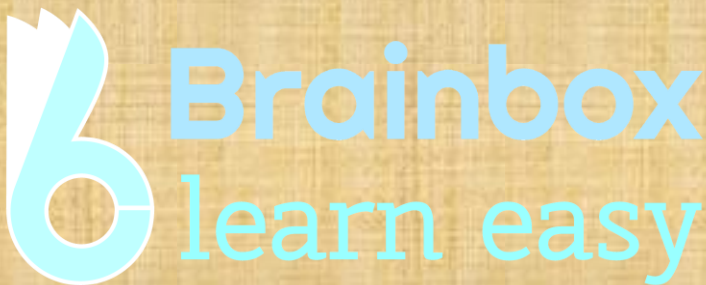
As you know, a **dash** is longer than a **hyphen**. It is almost double the size of a hyphen. It is used to give additional information, to indicate added emphasis, an interruption, or an abrupt change of thought.

In the above sentence 1, **the dash** is used to give important additional information about the white boy.

Dashes are used to give very important additional information. They are also used to emphasize certain aspects of what was said earlier.

For example, in the sentence 2, 'He was definitely a little Jamaican — a strong little Jamaican.', the phrase after the dash emphasizes what was said about the Jamaican by adding another dimension 'strength' and by repeating the phrase 'a little Jamaican'.

This can also be said without using the dash like this: 'He was definitely a strong little Jamaican', but the expression with the dash is more effective since the dash breaks the thought of the reader and then draws his/her attention to the phrase that follows it.



From the story, pick out 5 sentences with a dash or a set of commas.

Discuss the function of the dash /set of commas in each of them. In each case, substitute the commas with a dash or the other way round to observe the change in meaning.

SUGGESTED ANSWER

- The road on either side is flanked by red and green-roofed bungalows, green lawns and gardens. **(important additional information)**
- he was white, with hazel eyes and light-brown hair. Both were dressed in blue shirts and khaki pants ... **(important additional information)**
- I could not bring myself to believe such a thing, and yet, with my own eyes I had seen a little dark boy take orders from a little white boy — a little white boy, obviously his social equal ... **(dash emphasizes what was said about the little white boy)**
- How silly grown-ups are, how clever we are, how wonderfully able we are... **(important additional information)**
- 'I know all about the game,' he said. 'The boys are brothers — my sons.' **(dash emphasizes what was said about the boys)**
- This is Jamaica, I said in my heart, this is my country — my people. **(dash emphasizes what was said about the country)**