



Have You Ever...?

Exploring the present perfect

Have you ever traveled alone, won a competition, tried an unusual food, or helped with a community project?

Spanish uses the present perfect to connect a completed experience with the present:

He visitado México.^[SEP] I have visited Mexico.

The exact time is not important. What matters is that the experience is part of the person's life now.

Building the present perfect

The present perfect has two parts:

present tense of *haber* + past participle

Use the appropriate form of *haber*:

- yo: *he*
- tú: *has*

- él, ella, usted: *ha*
- nosotros: *hemos*
- vosotros: *habéis*
- ellos, ustedes: *han*

Then add the past participle:

- *hablar* → *hablado*
- *comer* → *comido*
- *vivir* → *vivido*

Examples:

- *He viajado.* — I have traveled.
- *Has aprendido mucho.* — You have learned a lot.
- *Ella ha terminado.* — She has finished.
- *Hemos comido.* — We have eaten.
- *Han vivido aquí.* — They have lived here.

Story: El mural de experiencias

La profesora llevó una caja de fotografías a la clase. Cada estudiante tenía que elegir una foto y hablar de algo que había hecho.

The teacher brought a box of photographs to class. Each student had to choose a picture and talk about something they had done.

—¿Alguna vez han hecho algo que les daba miedo al principio? —preguntó.

“Have you ever done something that frightened you at first?” she asked.

Sofía levantó una fotografía de una carrera. —He participado en tres carreras, pero esta ha sido la más difícil. He entrenado durante meses y finalmente he ganado una medalla.

Sofía held up a photograph of a race. “I have participated in three races, but this one has been the most difficult. I have trained for months, and I have finally won a medal.”

Mateo mostró varias fotos de montañas y playas. —Mi familia y yo hemos viajado a muchos lugares. Hemos visto paisajes increíbles, pero nunca hemos dormido bajo las estrellas.

Mateo displayed several pictures of mountains and beaches. “My family and I have traveled to many places. We have seen incredible scenery, but we have never slept under the stars.”

Alicia presentó una fotografía de un jardín comunitario. —Mis amigos y yo hemos plantado árboles y hemos recogido basura en el parque. También hemos pintado un mural para el centro juvenil.

Alicia presented a photograph of a community garden. “My friends and I have planted trees and picked up trash in the park. We have also painted a mural for the youth center.”

Entonces Daniel levantó un plato que había preparado. —Nunca he ganado una carrera ni he viajado muy lejos, pero he aprendido a cocinar. Hoy he hecho este plato para la clase.

Then Daniel held up a dish he had prepared. “I have never won a race or traveled very far, but I have learned to cook. Today I have made this dish for the class.”

Los estudiantes probaron la comida y añadieron sus fotografías a un mural. Al final de la clase, todos comprendieron que cada persona ha vivido experiencias interesantes.

The students tried the food and added their pictures to a mural. At the end of class, everyone understood that every person has had interesting experiences.

What have they done?

The present perfect connects each student’s past experiences to the discussion happening now:

- Sofia *ha participado* in three races.
- She *ha ganado* a medal.
- Mateo’s family *ha viajado* to many places.
- They *han visto* incredible scenery.
- Alicia and her friends *han plantado* trees.
- Daniel *ha aprendido* to cook.
- He *ha hecho* a dish for the class.

Irregular past participles

Several common verbs have irregular participles:

- *abrir* → *abierto* — opened
- *decir* → *dicho* — said or told

- *escribir* → *escrito* — written
- *hacer* → *hecho* — done or made
- *morir* → *muerto* — died
- *poner* → *puesto* — put or placed
- *resolver* → *resuelto* — solved
- *romper* → *roto* — broken
- *ver* → *visto* — seen
- *volver* → *vuelto* — returned

Examples:

- *He visto esa película.* — I have seen that movie.
- *Marta ha escrito un cuento.* — Marta has written a story.
- *Hemos hecho la tarea.* — We have done the homework.
- *Los estudiantes han resuelto el problema.* — The students have solved the problem.

Keep the two parts together

Do not place other words between *haber* and the participle.

Correct:

No he terminado la tarea. ^{[] []}_[SEP] I have not finished the homework.

Incorrect:

He no terminado la tarea. ✗

Object pronouns also go before *haber*:

Lo he visto. ^{[] []}_[SEP] I have seen it.

Ella me ha escrito. ^{[] []}_[SEP] She has written to me.

The past participle does not change to agree with the subject:

- *Ana ha escrito una carta.*
- *Ana y Marta han escrito una carta.*

It remains *escrito*, not *escrita* or *escritas*.

Useful experience words

The present perfect often appears with:

- *alguna vez* — ever
- *nunca* — never
- *ya* — already
- *todavía no* — not yet
- *recientemente* — recently
- *muchas veces* — many times
- *este año* — this year
- *hoy* — today

Examples:

- *¿Has viajado alguna vez solo?* — Have you ever traveled alone?
- *Nunca he probado pulpo.* — I have never tried octopus.
- *Ya hemos terminado.* — We have already finished.
- *Todavía no han llegado.* — They have not arrived yet.

Present perfect or preterite?

Compare:

He visitado Costa Rica.^{[I][SEP]} I have visited Costa Rica.

This describes a life experience without identifying a finished time.

Visité Costa Rica el año pasado.^{[I][SEP]} I visited Costa Rica last year.

The phrase *el año pasado* identifies a completed period, so the preterite is natural.

Another comparison:

- *Este año he leído cinco libros.*^{[I][SEP]} This year I have read five books.

- *El año pasado leí cinco libros.* ^[T]_[SEP] Last year I read five books.

Este año is still connected to the present. *El año pasado* is finished.

Usage varies across the Spanish-speaking world. In much of Latin America, speakers frequently use the preterite where speakers in Spain might prefer the present perfect. Both choices can be correct depending on the region and context.

Complete the experience

Write the correct present-perfect form.

1. Yo _____ tres países. (*visitar*)
2. Tú _____ una historia. (*escribir*)
3. Elena _____ una medalla. (*ganar*)
4. Nosotros _____ la película. (*ver*)
5. Mis amigos _____ un mural. (*pintar*)
6. Daniel _____ una comida especial. (*hacer*)
7. Ustedes _____ el problema. (*resolver*)
8. La profesora _____ las fotografías en la mesa. (*poner*)
9. Yo nunca _____ una carrera. (*correr*)
10. Ellos todavía no _____. (*volver*)

Choose the best tense

Select the present perfect or preterite.

1. Este mes (**he leído / leí**) tres libros.
2. Ayer (**he terminado / terminé**) el proyecto.
3. Nunca (**hemos probado / probamos**) esa comida.
4. El sábado pasado (**han visitado / visitaron**) el museo.
5. ¿Alguna vez (**has escrito / escribiste**) un poema?
6. En 2024 mi familia (**ha viajado / viajó**) a Perú.

7. Hoy la profesora (**ha explicado / explicó**) dos temas.
8. Cuando tenía diez años, (**he ganado / gané**) una competencia.

Comprehension challenge

Answer in Spanish.

1. ¿Qué llevó la profesora a la clase?
2. ¿En cuántas carreras ha participado Sofía?
3. ¿Qué ha ganado Sofía?
4. ¿Dónde nunca ha dormido la familia de Mateo?
5. ¿Qué han hecho Alicia y sus amigos en el parque?
6. ¿Qué ha aprendido Daniel?
7. ¿Qué hicieron con las fotografías?

Interview challenge

Ask a classmate five questions beginning with *¿Alguna vez has...?*

Possible topics include:

- Travel somewhere interesting
- Meet a famous person
- Win a prize
- Cook a complete meal
- Help a stranger
- Perform in front of an audience
- Break a bone
- See something surprising

Record each answer:

Lucía ha viajado a Colombia, pero nunca ha viajado sola.

Your experience mural

Write five sentences about things you have or have not done. Include:

- One regular participle
- One irregular participle
- *alguna vez*
- *nunca*
- *todavía no* or *ya*

You can begin:

He participado en...[SEP]Nunca he visto...[SEP]Ya he aprendido...[SEP]Todavía no he...

Answer key

Complete the experience

1. *he visitado*
2. *has escrito*
3. *ha ganado*
4. *hemos visto*
5. *han pintado*
6. *ha hecho*
7. *han resuelto*
8. *ha puesto*
9. *he corrido*
10. *han vuelto*

Choose the best tense

1. *he leído*
2. *terminé*
3. *hemos probado*
4. *visitaron*
5. *has escrito*
6. *viajó*
7. *ha explicado*
- 1 *gané*

1.Comprehension challenge

2. Llevó una caja de fotografías.
3. Ha participado en tres carreras.
4. Ha ganado una medalla.
5. Nunca han dormido bajo las estrellas.
6. Han plantado árboles, recogido basura y pintado un mural.
7. Ha aprendido a cocinar.
8. Añadieron las fotografías a un mural.

Your past is part of your present

Use the present perfect when a completed experience remains connected to the present:

haber + past participle

Now you are ready to ask—and answer—the question:

¿Alguna vez has...?