


Short Story: The Perfect Present

Level: A2-B1-B2

ENGLISH GRAMMAR: THE PRESENT PERFECT

AFFIRMATIVE FORM (+)	NEGATIVE FORM (-)	INTERROGATIVE FORM (?)
<p>I } have tried You }</p> <p>He/She/It → has tried</p> <p>We } have tried You }</p> <p>They }</p> <p>E.g. <i>We have tried it once.</i> <i>They have tried singing.</i></p>	<p>FULL FORM</p> <p>I have not eaten. You have not played. He has not run. We have not sung. You have not gone. They have not sat.</p> <p>SHORT FORM</p> <p>I haven't eaten. You haven't played. He hasn't run. We haven't sung. You haven't gone. They haven't sat.</p>	<p>YES/NO QUESTIONS</p> <p>I Have you started? we you they Has he started? she it</p> <p>WH-QUESTIONS</p> <p>What have I started? How long have you done this? Where has he been? Who has seen her? How have we faired so far? How often have you played? Why have they written?</p>

REGULAR VERBS	IRREGULAR VERBS		
Arrive Arrived	Slice Sliced	Make Made	Sit Sat
Start Started	Want Wanted	Have Had	Stand Stood
Play Played	Stay Stayed	Be Been	Buy Bought
Ban Banned	Plan Planned	Do Done	Teach Taught
Stop Stopped	Skip Skipped	Get Got	Speak Spoken
Marry Married	Try Tried	Run Run	Write Written

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Have you ever given somebody a present and they destroyed it right in front of your eyes? Well, believe it or not, this happened to me three days ago. My husband tore his Valentine's day gift and my heart hasn't stopped beating wildly since then.

It's the first time I have seen such a reaction from him. I have known Christopher since primary school. For some reason, we only became a couple when we met here again eleven years ago. We have been married for almost a decade now. During that entire period, he has never done anything as surprising as what he did on the 14th of February.

People can change, I realise. People can change, and you can't see that they are changing until it's too late.

There is nothing that could have prepared me for this. Until three days ago, he was still the same kind and generous spirit I have loved and cherished all these years.

We don't have any children yet but we have been talking about having some in the near future. Being abroad is not easy, you know, when it comes to getting stable and respectable jobs that can enable you to raise your kids in a dignified way. I know that this issue has been weighing heavily on him.

Let me tell you one thing. Christopher is one of the brightest people I know. He is smart and given the right opportunities he can go very far in life. His parents have always told him this. When we were at school, our teachers often impressed on him that he would become a doctor that could heal many people in our country. After he started working, his diligence did not escape his employers' notice either. He was given more responsibilities of course without a corresponding hike in his salary. Christopher did not complain at the time because he was grateful for simply having a job. It never crossed his mind that he could be more demanding.

THE PRESENT PERFECT

AFFIRMATIVE FORM (FULL AND SHORT FORMS)							
I	You	He	She	It	We	You	They
have tried	have tried	has tried			have tried		
've tried	've tried	's tried			've tried		

NEGATIVE FORM (FULL AND SHORT FORMS)							
I	You	He	She	It	We	You	They
have not tried	have not tried	has not tried			have not tried		
haven't tried	haven't tried	hasn't tried			haven't tried		

INTERROGATIVE FORM							
Have	Have	Has			Have		
I	you	he	she	it	we	you	they
tried...?							

Recently, it has dawned upon him though that he might never be able to house his family properly on such a meagre income. He has seen his colleagues with similar qualifications getting promotions and buying houses in pretty neighbourhoods and he knows that this kind of life is out of reach for him. We currently live in a dinghy one-bedroomed house and we cannot afford to have an extra room, even on our two salaries.

I have never known Christopher to be a bitter or resentful person. You know, life has not been really kind to him compared to what his peers have been through at the same age, yet, you will never hear him complaining. Never. He wakes up very early in the morning. He does whatever he has to do. After he knocks off, he comes back home and helps me with the housework even when I can tell that he is about to fall from physical and emotional exhaustion.

This is why I thought that the present was such a great idea!

Dear friends, I have come to a point in life where I don't believe in this 'immigration miracle' anymore. You know, we left our homes because the grass seemed greener here. We were disillusioned by our leaders whose greedy bellies left nothing for us in terms of health and education infrastructure. Frankly speaking, in the past fourteen years I have been here, life has been far from being rosy. All I can remember is work, hard work, strenuous work, and more work. There is no moment in my life when I do not think of a way that will keep me two steps away from the street.

Paradoxically, the harder you exert yourself, the less you get. Your efforts are not rewarded but you know that you have to keep going because this is the only thing that you can do.

I have met fellow immigrants who have lived here for more than twenty years and they still feel like they are sidelined in so many ways. Some of them have been sitting on the benches of life for so long that they have got so used to it, they don't even think of training themselves anymore. What will it amount to? they ask themselves. What is the purpose of learning new things when none of it will get duly noticed or rewarded?

THE PRESENT PERFECT

AFFIRMATIVE FORM	NEGATIVE FORM	INTERROGATIVE FORM	EXAMPLES
<p>I have tried/ I've tried</p> <p>You have tried/ You've tried</p> <p>He has tried/ He's tried</p> <p>She has tried/ She's tried</p> <p>It has tried/ It's tried</p> <p>We have tried/ We've tried</p> <p>You have tried/ You've tried</p> <p>They have tried/ They've tried</p>	<p>I have not tried/I haven't tried</p> <p>You have not tried/You haven't tried</p> <p>He has not tried/He hasn't tried</p> <p>She has not tried/She hasn't tried</p> <p>It has not tried/It hasn't tried</p> <p>We have not tried/We haven't tried</p> <p>You have not tried/You haven't tried</p> <p>They have not tried/They haven't tried</p>	<p>Have I tried?</p> <p>Have you done it?</p> <p>Has he been there?</p> <p>Has she gone there?</p> <p>Has it become real?</p> <p>Have we talked before?</p> <p>Have you taken it?</p> <p>Have they stopped coming?</p> <p>Your turn</p> <p>I.....</p> <p>You.....</p> <p>They.....</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I have never done this.</i> • <i>You haven't done the dishes.</i> • <i>He has gone to London.</i> • <i>She's been to Paris but now she is back.</i> • <i>They have sung this song before.</i> • <i>Have you seen her?</i> • <i>Has she eaten enough?</i> • <i>Have you read the news?</i> • <i>There has been a fire.</i>

Don't even talk about having children, they warn us. The children know that they are second-class citizens the moment they step out of the door. Is it wise then to bring them into such an unfriendly environment? Children need love and material things are not enough to make them feel like they are human beings with proper needs and aspirations, they say.

To say the truth, I know that there is no real future for us here. However, I am not the kind of person that will sit down and just watch while many positive things can be done to solve problems. I also know when enough is enough nevertheless.

Hence, there was no hesitation when I took our savings to buy our two one-way tickets to go back home. This was exactly one week ago. You cannot imagine how happy I felt when I got those precious tickets. I knew that our woes were finally over. I pictured myself eating authentic mangoes and sweet potatoes and not worrying about being assaulted at the supermarket. I saw myself laughing and crying with my family without an ounce of discomfort and fear. I saw my future children playing with their friends

in the yard and coming back inside for lunch, chatting about their awesome day and not telling me about bullying. I felt free and I couldn't wait to share this news to my husband.

I presented his air-ticket in wrapping paper for presents and waited for the right time to give it to him.

Up to now, I still can't believe his reaction.

He was surprised when he saw the envelop of course. He asked me if it was money or a shopping voucher. I told him that he would soon find out. He took a knife and slit the envelop open.

"Air tickets!" he exclaimed. "Two air tickets back home!" he shouted after a few seconds. "One-way tickets..."

He did not finish his sentence but looked at me instead. If looks could kill, I'm sure I'd have been long dead by now.

"The present is perfect Hannah."

THE PRESENT PERFECT

AFFIRMATIVE FORM

I **have tried**/ I've tried
You **have tried**/
You've tried
He **has tried**/ He's tried
She **has tried**/ She's tried
It **has tried**/ It's tried
We **have tried**/
We've tried
You **have tried**/
You've tried
They **have tried**/
They've tried

NEGATIVE FORM

I **have not tried**/I haven't tried
You **have not tried**/You haven't tried
He **has not tried**/He hasn't tried
She **has not tried**/She hasn't tried
It **has not tried**/It hasn't tried
We **have not tried**/We haven't tried
You **have not tried**/You haven't tried
They **have not tried**/They haven't tried

INTERROGATIVE FORM

Have I tried?
Have you done it?
Has he been there?
Has she gone there?
Has it become real?
Have we talked before?
Have you taken it?
Have they stopped coming?
Your turn
I.....
You.....
They.....

EXAMPLES

- *I have never done this.*
- *You haven't done the dishes.*
- *He has gone to London.*
- *She's been to Paris but now she is back.*
- *They have sung this song before.*
- *Have you seen her?*
- *Has she eaten enough?*
- *Have you read the news?*
- *There has been a fire.*

I stared at him. I thought this was what he'd always wanted all his life!

“Hannah, the present is perfect. We should forget the past and move on. A better future is yet to come. Our life is here now and we have to make the most of it. Everything will be alright, you’ll see. The good deeds a man has done before defend him. We will make it no matter what it takes. We have to keep on working hard. The rewards will come in their time. They will, don't worry.”

Well, you know, the rest is history...

He tore the air tickets and told me to forget about everything. How can I? There comes a time when feeding on hope and lies is no longer enough. You need something concrete to keep you going.

Forgetting is an impossible task.

Thinking that the situation will get better on its own is an impossible task.

I cannot forget.

I guess the damage has been done.

It is difficult to come back to the present and face reality when all I have been doing the past days is to dream about what I will do once I reach home and see my family.

I long for home.

I long for normalcy.

I long for a place where I will simply be.

Yet, I see Christopher and his optimism. He believes that everything will be alright in the end. Oh Christopher, my very optimistic Christopher.

Every day he reminds me that it is dangerous to live in the past. He says that if you aren't too careful, the past can drag you back and keep you from moving forward. The past is a dangerous place to permanently live in, he insists. Move on Hannah. Move on.

Christopher avoids any talk that does not help him advance in life. Daily complaints never helped anyone in this world, he says. Save your energy for constructive things, Hannah. This world is not fair. Accept this fact and try to whatever small thing you can do to correct the situation. Complaining will lead us nowhere.

What has he been doing all this time?

He still wakes up very early in the morning to do his everyday tasks.

He hasn't stopped talking about having children here and getting them a decent place to live.

He hasn't backtracked on getting a new job that will finally enable us to move to a better place.

He keeps on urging me to be the best version of myself. He tells me: " Smile to yourself when no one will. Laugh with yourself when no one will. Believe in whatever you are doing when no one will. Being able to do what you are doing is the reward. Do not let negativity affect you in any way. And most of all... don't look back, keep moving and do your best every single day. The present is perfect Hannah, the present is perfect."

THE PRESENT PERFECT

AFFIRMATIVE FORM (+)

NEGATIVE FORM (-)

EXAMPLES (Eg.)

FULL FORM		SHORT FORM		FULL FORM		SHORT FORM	
I	have eaten	I	've eaten	I	have not eaten	I	haven't eaten
You	have eaten	You	've eaten	You	have not eaten	You	haven't eaten
He	has eaten	He	's eaten	He	has not eaten	He	hasn't eaten
She							
It							
We	have eaten	We	've eaten	We	have not eaten	We	haven't eaten
You							
They							

- I have never done this.
- You haven't done the dishes.
- He has gone to London.
- She's been to Paris but now she is back.
- They have sung this song before.
- Have you seen her?
- Has she eaten enough?
- Have you read the news?
- There has been a fire.

INTERROGATIVE FORM

Have I eaten ...?

Have we eaten...?

Have you eaten ...?

Have you eaten...?

Has he/she/it eaten?

Have they eaten...?

