

Today! (1) – present perfect / past simple + dialog(ue)

Warning: the present perfect is tricky, hard to explain, because subjectivity is a common ingredient in its choice. If you get confused, follow your teacher's advice in class!!

Advertencia: *el pretérito perfecto inglés es difícil de explicar porque la subjetividad es uno de los típicos ingredientes que hace elegirlo. Si te lías, hazle caso a tu profe en clase!*

Case 1. Time phrase: "today"

What **have** you **done** today?

What **did** you **do** today?

Both forms are possible. It all depends on your **point of view**, or the speaker's point of view (or *feeling* about the time zones): **when you use the past simple, you feel the day is over** (you feel the day has finished).

Case 2. Time phrases: different parts of the day

What **have** you **done** this morning?

What **did** you **do** this morning?

Morning: The **difference** here is very **important!** If it is NOT the morning, you HAVE TO use the past simple. If it IS still morning, you HAVE TO use the present perfect!

What **have** you **done** this afternoon?

What **did** you **do** this afternoon?

Afternoon: The **difference** here is very **important**, too! Remember that the Spanish "tarde" is just till 6.00PM in English, and that from 6.00PM till nighttime, English speakers call that "evening" and Spanish speakers call it "tarde" or "noche".

So, again, if it is BEFORE 6PM you HAVE TO use the present perfect, but if it is AFTER 6PM you HAVE TO use the past simple!

What **have** you **done** this evening?

What **did** you **do** this evening?

Evening: Both are possible (except if it is the morning, called in Spanish "madrugada"), but these questions are not common. In bed, or at the end of the day, we usually ask "How was your day?"

Notice!

If you analyze (US) /analyse (UK) these examples, you will probably see that the tense is often connected to the TIME phrase: "today" and "this morning" are totally different:

What **have** you **done** today? (we're still in this time: today!)

What **did** you **do** this morning? (we're not in the morning anymore, it's the afternoon).

If you hear... a) Mary **called** and b) Mary **has called**, you know the speaker *feels* in a different "time zone" in example a, and in the same time zone of the event in example b.

Did you understand? (This case will come up in the future!)

So, what can you say?

a) Mary **called** or

b) Mary **has called**?

You can say both, depending on the time zone you feel you are in, or the speaker feels he or she is in. When we speak, sometimes we don't mention the time zone, but we use the correct tense!

And what can you say here?:

a) Mary today, and

b) Mary this morning.

In a) you need to use the present perfect if the day is not over!

In b) you have to use the past simple if it is not the morning anymore. (If the speaker mentions the morning, that is probably because it is not the morning anymore!)

Listen and repeat

Here is a dialog(ue) about "today" where the speakers **don't use** the **present perfect** – they just use the past simple!! Can you work it all out? (= Do you understand why?)

Peter: (In bed at night) What did you do today?

Pixie: The usual... I went to work, back home for lunch, back to work till five, and now I'm in bed with you! What did you do this morning?

Peter: I went shopping for food and then I did some housework. Not very exciting!

Pixie: Well, let's do something special now! I'm going to read you a story, and tomorrow you can read a story to me!

Peter: Good idea!

Pixie: Or we can make love, of course!

Peter: I'm too tired now! Let's do that on Saturday!

Pixie: It's on! [iVale!] Now listen...

Now listen to the next episode, a monolog(ue) called "My Day Today," and notice the use of the present perfect!