

The perfect aspect

The perfect aspect expresses two ideas.

- 1 The action is completed before another time.

Have you ever been to America? (= some time before now)

When I arrived, Peter had left. (= some time before I arrived)

I'll have finished the report by 10.00. (= some time before then)

- 2 The exact time of the verb action is not important. The perfect aspect refers to indefinite time.

Have you seen my wallet anywhere? I've lost it. (= before now)

We'll have arrived by this evening. (= before this evening)

The exception to this is the Past Perfect, which *can* refer to definite time.

I recognized him immediately. I had met him in 1992 at university.

Perfect tenses are dealt with further in Units 2, 3, and 5.