

Drink and drugs

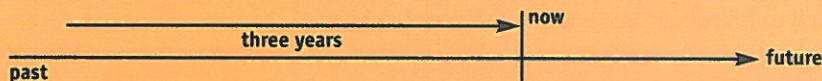
Perfect tenses

Look at the text below.

In 1997, my life was a mess. I was an alcoholic, and I could not give up. I had seen five different doctors and none of them had been able to help me. By 1999, I had lost my job and my wife and children. At the age of 26, I nearly died and spent several weeks in hospital. Then I tried the Mind Method, and it worked. What a change! Now I don't drink and I haven't smoked a cigarette for three years! Today, life is great!

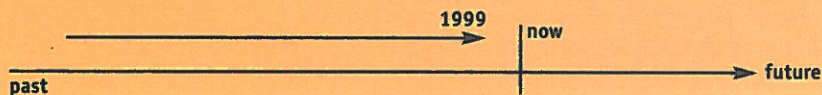
Perfect tenses have the idea of *up to a moment in time*. If we are talking about a time up to the present, we use the **present perfect** (*have/has + past participle*).

I haven't smoked a cigarette for three years. (three years until today)



If we are talking about a period of time up to a moment in the past, we use the **past perfect** (*had + past participle*). We use the preposition **by** to refer to that time.

By 1999, I had lost my wife and children. (up to 1999)



To talk about something that happened at a specific time in the past, we use the **past simple** tense.

In 1997, my life was a mess.

1 Underline the correct verb form in the sentences below.

- Example: a Yesterday I had seen/saw the doctor.
 b At the age of six I had started/started school.
 c My dad was in the army, and by 1996, we had moved/moved seven times!
 d I can't give you a lift - I haven't had/didn't have a car for years!
 e I've been married/was married for 10 years, before my wife left me last year.
 f The letter had arrived/arrived by nine o'clock this morning.
 g We haven't seen/didn't see them since last week.

2 Work in pairs. Read each sentence and decide if it is correct or not. If it is not correct, circle the mistake and correct the sentence. (The mistakes can be of use or form.)

- Example: a I've lived in this house ten years (by today). *I've lived in this house ten years.*
 b Mum and Dad had been married for eight years before they had their first child.
 c I moved house in 1976 and I lived there ever since.
 d By the end of the night, George had spent nearly all his money.
 e By the time they are 20, most people in Britain have tried alcohol.
 f After a wonderful three week-holiday, we finally came home.
 g By dinner time, Lucy had already ate all her chocolates!