

PRESENT PERFECT IN ACADEMIC WRITING

Grammar – Perfect Tenses

There are many contexts in academic writing where you have to report on past events. You may need to report on work done by other researchers for example, in a summary or literature review or you may be reporting on your own work. Additionally, you may need to describe non-academic events, for example in an interview. In doing this you will need to make appropriate choices of verb tense forms. In this document we look at how academic writers choose present perfect in reporting events and situations.

In academic writing the distinction between the past simple and present perfect often indicates the difference between specific information and generalizations. For example, in reporting empirical investigations such as **experiments or surveys, detailed information specific to the study is reported in the simple past tense**, while the **present perfect tense is used for generalized conclusions**.

This excerpt is from a paper by Harry Lerner, a researcher at The University of Western Ontario shows some examples of the present perfect. In these cases the present perfect is really concerned with the present situation, even though the action that the verb refers to happened or started in the past. Academic writers often choose the Present Perfect Tense instead of the Past Tense when they are really interested in the **present consequences of recent events**.

Abstract

*The role of archaeology in the broader field of anthropology **has grown** from mere travelogues making no contribution to further our understanding of the past, to detailed scientific analyses forming a permanent complex bond between the two fields of endeavor.*

*The leading figure in the discipline responsible for the formation of this bond is Lewis R. Binford. He envisions a pivotal role for archaeology in the piecing together of cultural puzzles, and his vision **has become** what is termed the New Archaeology.*

Conclusions

The New Archaeology has fostered a number of different ways of observing and interpreting the archaeological record.

This archaeology text illustrates the *present* situation of the field, which is why the verbs are in present perfect.

Complete the sentences using the appropriate form of the verb in brackets. Check your answers with your ASK Tutor.

From a European perspective, there 1. _____ (be) little research on teaching and learning in small rural schools over the last two decades ([Kvalsund & Hargreaves, 2009](#)), and information on the incidence of multi-grade teaching is difficult to find ([Mulryan-Kyne, 2007](#)). [Little \(2001\)](#) points out that most research on multi-grade teaching 2. _____ (focus) on its impact on students' learning. The discussion of multi-grade teaching 3. _____ (address) the question of whether students' learning results are better in single-grade classes or in multi-grade classes, but studies 4. _____ (not find) significant differences between these two forms (e.g., [Veenman, 1995](#); [Åberg-Bengtsson, 2009](#); [Lindström and Lindahl, 2011](#)).

*According to [Hoffman \(2003\)](#), around the year 2000, the increased awareness of multi-age education as a child-centered strategy **began** to arouse interest in the practice throughout the United States as well as in many other countries. For example, in the Central-European German-speaking research area, multi-grade teaching 5. _____ (investigate) in recent years, especially from the point of view of school reform. The practice 6. _____ (seen) as a possibility to optimize the phase of school beginning, as multi-grade teaching enables flexible school entry and does not "dramatize" developmental differences between children ([Heinzel, 2007, p. 38](#)).*

Excerpt from <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0883035515000749>

Why is the word *began* used in the text? Don't forget to ask your ASK Tutor!



Answers



Task 1

1. Has been
2. Has focused
3. Has addressed
4. Have not found
5. has been investigated
6. *has been seen*

Task 2

The information refers to a previous year (*around the year 2000*), so this indicates a past event