

how long have you (been) ... ?

A Study this example situation:



Dan and Kate are married. They got married exactly 20 years ago, so today is their 20th wedding anniversary.

They **have been** married **for 20 years**.

We say: They **are** married. (*present*)

but How long have they **been** married?
 (not How long are they married?)
 They **have been** married **for 20 years**.
 (not They are married for 20 years)

(*present perfect*)

We use the *present perfect* to talk about something that began in the past and still continues now.

Compare the *present* and *present perfect*:

- ☐ Paul is in hospital.
- but He's **been** in hospital **since Monday**. (= He **has** been ...)
(not Paul is in hospital since Monday)
- ☐ We **know** each other very well.
- but We've **known** each other **for a long time**.
(not We know)
- ☐ Do they **have** a car?
- but How long **have** they **had** their car?
- ☐ She's **waiting** for somebody.
- but She **hasn't been** waiting very long.

present
 he is
 we know
 do they have
 she is waiting

present perfect
 he has been
 we have known
 have they had
 she has been waiting

past

now

B I've known / I've had / I've lived etc. is the *present perfect simple*.
 I've been learning / I've been waiting etc. is the *present perfect continuous*.

When we ask or say 'how long', the continuous is more usual (see Unit 10):

- ☐ I've **been learning** English **since January**.
- ☐ It's **been raining** **all morning**.
- ☐ Richard **has been doing** the same job **for 20 years**.
- ☐ 'How long **have** you **been driving**?' 'Since I was 17.'

Some verbs (for example, **know** and **like**) are not normally used in the continuous:

- ☐ How long **have** you **known** Jane? (not have you been knowing)
- ☐ I've **had** these shoes for ages. (not I've been having)

See also Units 4A and 10C. For **have**, see Unit 17.

C You can use either the continuous or simple with **live** and **work**:

- ☐ Julia **has been living** in this house for a long time. or Julia **has lived** ...
- ☐ How long **have** you **been working** here? or How long **have** you **worked** here?

But we use the simple (**have lived** etc.) with **always**:

- ☐ I've **always lived** in the country. (not always been living)

D We say 'I **haven't** (done something) **since/for** ...' (*present perfect simple*):

- ☐ I **haven't seen** Tom **since Monday**. (= Monday was the last time I saw him)
- ☐ Sarah **hasn't phoned** for ages. (= the last time she phoned was ages ago)

Exercises

11.1 Which is right?

- 1 Ben is a friend of mine. I know / ~~I've known~~ him very well. (I know is correct)
- 2 I like your house. How long do you live / have you lived here?
- 3 You'll need an umbrella if you go out now. It's raining / It's been raining.
- 4 The weather is / has been awful since I arrived here.
- 5 I'm sorry I'm late. Are you waiting / Have you been waiting long?
- 6 We've moved. We're living / We've been living in New Street now.
- 7 I met Maria only recently. I don't know / I haven't known her very long.
- 8 Lisa is in Germany. She's / She's been there on a business trip.
- 9 That's a very old bike. How long do you have / have you had it?
- 10 I'm not feeling good. I'm feeling / I've been feeling ill all day.

11.2 Read the situations and write questions using the words in brackets.

- 1 A friend tells you that Paul is in hospital. You ask him:
(how long / Paul / hospital?) How long has Paul been in hospital?
- 2 You know that Jane is a good friend of Katherine's. You ask Jane:
(how long / you / know / Katherine?)
- 3 Your friend's sister went to Australia some time ago and she's still there. You ask your friend:
(how long / sister / in Australia?)
- 4 You meet a woman who tells you that she teaches English. You ask her:
(how long / you / teach / English?)
- 5 Tom always wears the same jacket. It's very old. You ask him:
(how long / you / have / that jacket?)
- 6 You are talking to a friend about Joe, who now works at the airport. You ask your friend:
(how long / Joe / work / airport?)
- 7 You meet somebody on a plane. She says that she lives in Chicago. You ask her:
(you / always / live / in Chicago?)

11.3 Complete B's answers to A's questions.

A

- 1 Paul is in hospital, isn't he?
- 2 Do you see Lisa very often?
- 3 Is Paul married?
- 4 Is Amy married?
- 5 Do you still play tennis?
- 6 Are you waiting for the bus?
- 7 You know Mel, don't you?
- 8 Jack is never ill, is he?
- 9 Martin lives in Italy, doesn't he?
- 10 Sue lives in Berlin, doesn't she?
- 11 Is Joe watching TV?
- 12 Do you watch TV a lot?
- 13 Do you have a headache?
- 14 Do you go to the cinema a lot?
- 15 Would you like to go to New York one day?

B

- Yes, he has been in hospital since Monday.
- No, I haven't seen her for three months.
- Yes, he married for ten years.
- Yes, she married to a German guy.
- No, I tennis for years.
- Yes, I for about 20 minutes.
- Yes, we each other a long time.
- No, he ill since I've known him.
- Yes, he in Milan.
- Yes, she in Berlin for many years.
- Yes, he TV all evening.
- No, I TV since last weekend.
- Yes, I a headache all morning.
- No, I to the cinema for ages.
- Yes, I to go to New York.
- (use **always** / **want**)