

## How long have you (been) ... ?

A

Study this example situation:



Dan and Jenny 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? (*present perfect*)

(*not How long are they married?*)

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

(*not They are married for 20 years*)

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

- Paul is in hospital.
- but **He's been** in hospital **since Monday**. (= **He has** been ...)  
(*not Paul is in hospital since Monday*)
- Do you know** each other well?
- but **Have you known** each other **for a long time**?  
(*not Do you know*)
- She's **waiting** for somebody.
- but **She's been waiting** **all morning**.
- Do they have** a car?
- but **How long have they had** their car?

*present*  
he is  
do you know  
she is waiting

*present perfect*  
he has been  
have you known  
she has been waiting

past now

B

I **have known/had/lived** etc. is the *present perfect simple*.

I **have been learning / been waiting / been doing** 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 **for six months**.
- It's **been raining** since **lunchtime**.
- 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/like/believe**) are not normally used in the continuous:

- How long **have you known** Jane? (*not have you been knowing*)
- I've **had** a pain in my stomach all day. (*not I've been having*)

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

C

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

- Julia **has been living / has lived** here for a long time.
- How long **have you been working / have you worked** here?

But use the simple (I've **lived / done** 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 Are the underlined verbs right or wrong? Correct them where necessary.

- 1 Ben is a friend of mine. I know him very well.
- 2 Ben is a friend of mine. I know him for a long time.
- 3 Sarah and Adam are married since July.
- 4 The weather is awful. It's raining again.
- 5 The weather is awful. It's raining all day.
- 6 I like your house. How long are you living there?
- 7 Gary is working in a shop for the last few months.
- 8 I don't know Tom well. We've only met a few times.
- 9 I gave up drinking coffee. I don't drink it for a year.
- 10 That's a very old bike. How long do you have it?

OK

I've known him

## 11.2 Read the situations and write questions from the words in brackets.

- 1 A friend tells you that Paul is in hospital. You ask him:  
(how long / be / in hospital?) How long has Paul been in hospital?
- 2 You meet a woman who tells you that she teaches English. You ask her:  
(how long / teach / English?)
- 3 You know that Jane is a good friend of Katherine's. You ask Jane:  
(how long / know / Katherine?)
- 4 Your friend's brother went to Australia some time ago and he's still there. You ask your friend:  
(how long / be / in Australia?)
- 5 Tom always wears the same jacket. It's a very old jacket. You ask him:  
(how long / have / that jacket?)
- 6 You are talking to a friend about Joe. Joe now works at the airport. You ask your friend:  
(how long / work / at the airport?)
- 7 A friend of yours is having guitar lessons. You ask him:  
(how long / have / guitar lessons?)
- 8 You meet somebody on a plane. She says that she lives in Chicago. You ask her:  
(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 Ann very often?
- 3 Is Amy married?
- 4 Are you waiting for me?
- 5 You know Mel, don't you?
- 6 Do you still play tennis?
- 7 Is Joe watching TV?
- 8 Do you watch TV a lot?
- 9 Do you have a headache?
- 10 Adrian is never ill, is he?
- 11 Are you feeling ill?
- 12 Sue lives in Berlin, doesn't she?
- 13 Do you go to the cinema a lot?
- 14 Would you like to go to New York one day?

B

- 1 Yes, he has been in hospital since Monday.
- 2 No, I haven't seen her for three months.
- 3 Yes, she married for ten years.
- 4 Yes, I for the last half hour.
- 5 Yes, we each other a long time.
- 6 No, I tennis for years.
- 7 Yes, he TV all evening.
- 8 No, I TV for ages.
- 9 Yes, I a headache all morning.
- 10 No, he ill since I've known him.
- 11 Yes, I ill all day.
- 12 Yes, she in Berlin for the last few years.
- 13 No, I to the cinema for ages.
- 14 Yes, I to go to New York.  
(use always / want)