Unit 11

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?

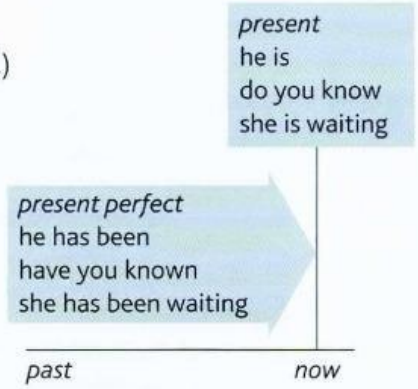
but **Have** you **known** each other **for a long time**?
(*not* Do you know)

- 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?



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 / I've 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)

I haven't ... since/for → Unit 8B Present perfect continuous → Units 9–10 For and since → Unit 13A

LIVEWORKSHEETS

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. OK
2 Ben is a friend of mine. I know him for a long time. I've known him
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?

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	B
1	Paul is in hospital, isn't he?	Yes, he has been in hospital since Monday.
2	Do you see Ann very often?	No, I haven't seen her for three months.
3	Is Amy married?	Yes, she ..... married for ten years.
4	Are you waiting for me?	Yes, I ..... for the last half hour.
5	You know Mel, don't you?	Yes, we ..... each other a long time.
6	Do you still play tennis?	No, I ..... tennis for years.
7	Is Joe watching TV?	Yes, he ..... TV all evening.
8	Do you watch TV a lot?	No, I ..... TV for ages.
9	Do you have a headache?	Yes, I ..... a headache all morning.
10	Adrian is never ill, is he?	No, he ..... ill since I've known him.
11	Are you feeling ill?	Yes, I ..... ill all day.
12	Sue lives in Berlin, doesn't she?	Yes, she ..... in Berlin for the last few years.
13	Do you go to the cinema a lot?	No, I ..... to the cinema for ages.
14	Would you like to go to New York one day?	Yes, I ..... to go to New York. (*use* **always** / **want**)

LIVEWORKSHEETS