Time expressions

A Phrases with *time*

We got to the meeting **in time** [before the meeting started].
My brother is always **on time** [not early or late].
It's time (**for** us) **to** go. [used to say that something should happen now]
Do you **have time for** a cup of coffee? [have enough time to do something]
Call me **the next time** you're in London. [on the next occasion]
The weather was wonderful **the last time** we were there. [on the last occasion]
Sophie and I arrived **at the same time,** 9 o'clock exactly.

B Time prepositions often confused

I'll be here **until** 4.30. [I won't leave before 4.30]
I'll be there **by** 8.15. [not later than 8.15]

I've worked here **for** six months. (*for* + a period of time, e.g. a week, ten days, two years)
I've worked here **since** May. (*since* + a point in time in the past, e.g. last Friday, March, 2011)

I worked on a farm **during** the summer. (this tells you 'when')
I worked on a farm **for** a month. (this tells you 'how long') (NOT ~~during~~ a month)

I'm going back to Brazil **in** ten days' **time** [ten days from now]. (NOT ~~after~~ ten days)

C Approximate periods of time – past, present and future

Past
I've known Lucia **for ages** [for a long time, e.g. many years].
I haven't been to the dentist **recently**/**lately** [e.g. in the last few months].
I saw Tom **recently** [e.g. a few weeks ago / not long ago].
I used to go skiing, but that was **a long time ago** [e.g. 5– 10 years ago; *syn* **ages ago**].
My sister went to the zoo **the other day** [e.g. a few days ago, perhaps a week].

Present
I don't see my brother much **these days** [a period including the past and now; *syn* **nowadays**].

Future
This dictionary's fine **for the time being** [for now / the near future – but not for a long time].
I'm sure I'll go to America **one day** [in the future but I don't know when].

D Counting time

There are 60 **seconds** in a minute; 60 minutes in an hour; 24 hours in a day; 7 days in a week; 2 weeks in a **fortnight**; 52 weeks in a year; 10 years in a **decade**; 100 years in a **century**.

E *Take* and *last*

We use **take** to say how long we need to do something.
It takes me half an hour to get to school.
We can walk, but it'll **take** (**us**) a long time.

We use **last** to talk about how long something continues, from the beginning to the end.
The course **lasts for** ten weeks.
How long does the film **last?**
The battery in my camera didn't **last long** [continue for a long time].

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Complete the sentences.

1 I'll see you the *next* time I come to London.
2 The shop closes at 5.30. If we don't hurry, we'll never get there ..... time.
3 I always get to meetings ..... time; I hate it when people are late.
4 I'm afraid I won't ..... time to see you this week.
5 I'll have to go soon. It's time ..... me to pick up the children from school.
6 Julian and I got to the station at the ..... time.

Choose the correct word to complete the sentences.

1 I'll see you *in* / *after* ten days' time.
2 The teacher told us to finish our homework *by* / *until* Monday.
3 We can't leave *by* / *until* the others get back.
4 I've been in the army *for* / *since* I was eighteen.
5 They've worked here *for* / *since* / *during* six months.
6 I visit my uncle every week *for* / *since* / *during* the winter.
7 I was at university *for* / *since* / *during* three years.
8 She's going back to France *in* / *after* three months' time.
9 I haven't seen them *for* / *since* last Thursday.

Replace the underlined words with more 'approximate' time expressions.

1 I had my hair cut <u>two weeks ago</u>. *recently*
2 I went to Egypt with my parents but that was <u>ten years ago</u>. .....
3 I went to the library <u>three days ago</u>. .....
4 I haven't been to the cinema <u>for the last three weeks</u>. .....
5 I haven't been to a concert <u>for three or four years</u>. .....
6 This computer will be fine <u>for the next year</u>. .....

Test your general knowledge. Can you complete these sentences with the correct number or period of time? Choose from the options given:

1963 10 1960s 7 50 19 fortnight. 20

1 Michael Jackson died in *2009* .
2 The Olympic Games usually last about a ..... .
3 Picasso was born in the .....th century, and died in the .....th century.
4 President Kennedy died in ..... . That's over ..... years ago.
5 It takes approximately ..... hours to fly from London to New York.
6 The best athletes can run 100 metres in less than ..... seconds.
7 The ..... was the decade in which the USA and USSR were trying to be the first country to put a man on the moon.

LIVEWORKSHEETS