

for and since when ... ? and how long ... ?

A We use **for** and **since** to say how long something has been happening.

We use **for** + a period of time:

- We've been waiting **for two hours**.



for		
two hours	a long time	a week
20 minutes	six months	ages
five days	50 years	years

- Sally has been working here **for six months**. (*not since six months*)
- I haven't seen Tom **for three days**.

We use **since** + the start of a period:

- We've been waiting **since 8 o'clock**.



since		
8 o'clock	April	lunchtime
Monday	2001	we arrived
12 May	Christmas	I got up

- Sally has been working here **since April**. (= from April until now)
- I haven't seen Tom **since Monday**.

B We often leave out **for** (but not usually in negative sentences):

- They've been married **for ten years**. *or* They've been married **ten years**.
- They **haven't had** a holiday **for ten years**. (*you need for*)

You can use **in** instead of **for** in negative sentences (**I haven't ...** etc.):

- They **haven't had** a holiday **in ten years**. (= **for** ten years)

We do *not* use **for** + **all ...** (**all day / all my life** etc.):

- I've lived here **all my life**. (*not for all my life*)

C Compare **when ... ?** (+ *past simple*) and **how long ... ?** (+ *present perfect*):



- A: **When** did it start raining?
 B: It started raining **an hour ago / at 1 o'clock**.
- A: **How long** has it been raining?
 B: It's been raining **for an hour / since 1 o'clock**.



- A: **When** did Joe and Kate first meet?
 B: They first met { **a long time ago**.
 when they were at school.
- A: **How long** have they known each other?
 B: They've known each other { **for a long time**.
 since they were at school.

D We say:

it's (= it is)	a long time	since something happened
<i>or</i> it's been (= it has been)	six months (<i>etc.</i>)	

- It's two years since** I last saw Joe. *or* **It's been two years since ...**
 (= I **haven't seen** Joe for two years)
- It's ages since** we went to the cinema. *or* **It's been ages since ...**
 (= We **haven't been** to the cinema for ages)
- How long is it since** Mrs Hill died? *or* **How long has it been since ...**
 (= when did she die?)

Exercises

12.1 Write for or since.

- 1 It's been raining since lunchtime.
- 2 Paul has lived in Brazil ten years.
- 3 I'm tired of waiting. We've been sitting here an hour.
- 4 Kevin has been looking for a job he left school.
- 5 I haven't been to a party ages.
- 6 I wonder where Joe is. I haven't seen him last week.
- 7 Jane is away on holiday. She's been away Friday.
- 8 The weather is dry. It hasn't rained a few weeks.

12.2 Look at each answer and choose the right question.

- | | | |
|---|---|---------------------|
| 1 | How long have they been married?
When did they get married?
(When did they get married? <i>is correct</i>) | Ten years ago. |
| 2 | How long have you had this car?
When did you buy this car? | About five years. |
| 3 | How long have you been waiting?
When did you get here? | Only a few minutes. |
| 4 | How long have you been doing your course?
When did your course start? | September. |
| 5 | How long has Anna been in London?
When did Anna arrive in London? | Last week. |
| 6 | How long have you known each other?
When did you first meet each other? | A long time. |

12.3 Read the situations and complete the sentences.

- 1 It's raining. It's been raining since lunchtime. It started raining at lunchtime.
- 2 Ann and Jess are friends. They first met years ago. They've known each other for years.
- 3 Mark is unwell. He became ill on Sunday. He has Sunday.
- 4 Sarah is married. She's been married for a year. She got
- 5 You have a headache. It started when you woke up.
I've I woke up.
- 6 Sue is in a meeting at work. It's been going on since 9 o'clock.
The meeting at 9 o'clock.
- 7 You're working in a hotel. You started working there six months ago.
I've been
- 8 Kate is learning Japanese. She's been doing this for a long time.
Kate started

12.4 Complete B's sentences.

- | | |
|--|--|
| A | B |
| 1 Do you often go on holiday? | No, I <u>haven't had a holiday for</u> five years. |
| 2 Have you seen Lisa recently? | No, I about a month. |
| 3 Do you still go swimming regularly? | No, I a long time. |
| 4 Do you still ride a bike these days? | No, I ages. |

Now write B's answers again. This time use **It's ... since ...**.

- 5 (1) No, it's five years since I last had a holiday.
- 6 (2) No, it's
- 7 (3) No,
- 8 (4)

A Study this example situation:



Tom is looking for his key. He can't find it.
He **has lost** his key. (*present perfect*)
This means that he doesn't have his key *now*.

Ten minutes later:



Now Tom **has found** his key. He has it now.
Has he **lost** his key? No, he **has found** it.
Did he **lose** his key? Yes, he **did**.
He **lost** his key (*past simple*)
but now he **has found** it. (*present perfect*)

The *present perfect* (something **has happened**) is a *present* tense. It tells us about the situation *now*. 'Tom **has lost** his key' = he doesn't have his key *now* (see Unit 7).

The *past simple* (something **happened**) tells us only about the *past*. If somebody says 'Tom **lost** his key', we don't know whether he has the key now or not. We know only that he lost it at some time in the past.

Compare *present perfect* and *past simple*:

- They've **gone** away. They'll be back on Friday. (*they are away now*)
- They **went** away, but I think they're back at home now. (*not They've gone away*)
- It **has stopped** raining now, so we don't need the umbrella. (*it isn't raining now*)
- It **stopped** raining for a while, but now it's raining again. (*not It has stopped*)

B You can use the present perfect for new or recent happenings:

- I've **repaired** the washing machine. It's working OK now.
- 'Hannah **has had** a baby! It's a boy.' 'That's great news.'

Usually, you can also use the past simple:

- I **repaired** the washing machine. It's working OK now.

Use the past simple (*not* the present perfect) for things that are not recent or new:

- Mozart **was** a composer. He **wrote** more than 600 pieces of music.
(*not has been ... has written*)
- My mother **grew** up in Italy. (*not has grown*)

Compare:

Somebody **has invented** a new type of washing machine.
Who **invented** the telephone? (*not has invented*)

C We use the present perfect to give new information (see Unit 7). But if we continue to talk about it, we normally use the past simple:

- A: Ow! I've **burnt** myself.
B: How **did** you **do** that? (*not have you done*)
A: I **picked** up a hot dish. (*not have picked*)
- A: Look! Somebody **has spilt** something on the sofa.
B: Well, it **wasn't** me. I **didn't do** it. (*not hasn't been ... haven't done*)

Exercises

13.1 Complete the sentences. Use the present perfect where possible. Otherwise use the past simple.

13.2 Are the underlined parts of these sentences OK? Correct them where necessary.

- Did you hear about Sophie? She's given up her job.
- My mother has grown up in Italy.
- How many plays has William Shakespeare written?
- I've forgotten his name. Is it Joe or Jack?
- Who has invented paper?
- Drugs have become a big problem everywhere.
- We've washed the car, but now it's dirty again.
- Where have you been born?
- Ellie has gone shopping. She'll be back in about an hour.
- Albert Einstein has been the scientist who has developed the theory of relativity.

OK
 My mother grew up

13.3 Put the verb into the correct form, present perfect or past simple.

- It stopped raining for a while, but now it's raining again. (it / stop)
- The town where I live is very different now. It has changed a lot. (it / change)
- I studied German at school, but _____ most of it now. (I / forget)
- The police _____ three people, but later they let them go. (arrest)
- What do you think of my English? Do you think _____? (it / improve)
- Are you ready to go? _____ your coffee? (you / finish)
- _____ for a job as a tour guide, but I wasn't successful. (I / apply)
- Where's my bike? _____ outside the house, but it's not there now. (it / be)
- Quick! We need to call an ambulance. _____ an accident. (there / be)
- A: I've found my phone.
 B: Oh, good. Where _____ it? (you / find)
 A: _____ at the bottom of my bag. (It / be)
- A: Ben won't be able to play tennis for a while. _____ his arm. (He / break)
 B: Oh. How _____? (that / happen)
 A: _____ off a ladder. (He / fall)