

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].

Exercises

60.1 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.

60.2 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.

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

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

60.4 Test your general knowledge. Can you complete these sentences with the correct number or period of time?

- 1 Michael Jackson died in 2009.
- 2 The Olympic Games usually last about a
- 3 Picasso was born in theth century, and died in theth 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.

60.5 Over to you

Complete the sentences about yourself. If possible, compare your answers with someone else.

- 1 I've been in my present school/university/job for
- 2 It takes me to get to school/university/work.
- 3 A typical school/college/working day for me lasts
- 4 I've been studying English since
- 5 I haven't actually spoken English since
- 6 I saw the other day.
- 7 Nowadays I don't
- 8 One day I hope