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

We do not use for + all … (all day / all my life etc.):
- I’ve lived here all my life. (not for all my life)

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.
A: How long have they known each other?
B: They’ve known each other for a long time.

D

We say:
- 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 ______________ 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. ______________ Ten years ago.
   - How long have they been married?
   - When did they get married?
   - (When did they get married? is correct)

2. ______________ About five years.
   - How long have you had this car?
   - When did you buy this car?

3. ______________ Only a few minutes.
   - How long have you been waiting?
   - When did you get here?

4. ______________ September.
   - How long have you been doing your course?
   - When did your course start?

5. ______________ Last week.
   - How long has Anna been in London?
   - When did Anna arrive in London?

6. ______________ A long time.
   - How long have you known each other?
   - When did you first meet each other?

12.3 Read the situations and complete the sentences.

1. It’s raining. It’s been raining since lunchtime. It ______________ at lunchtime.
2. Ann and Jess are friends. They first met years ago. They’ve ______________ 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
1. Do you often go on holiday? No, I ______________ 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.

B

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

5. (1) No, ______________ I last had a holiday...
6. (2) No, it’s
7. (3) No,
8. (4)