

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) <i>or</i> it's been (= it has been)	a long time six months (<i>etc.</i>)	since something happened
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- 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 | <p style="text-align: center;">How long have they been married?
When did they get married?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(When did they get married? <i>is correct</i>)</p> | Ten years ago. |
| 2 | <p style="text-align: center;">How long have you had this car?
When did you buy this car?</p> | About five years. |
| 3 | <p style="text-align: center;">How long have you been waiting?
When did you get here?</p> | Only a few minutes. |
| 4 | <p style="text-align: center;">How long have you been doing your course?
When did your course start?</p> | September. |
| 5 | <p style="text-align: center;">How long has Anna been in London?
When did Anna arrive in London?</p> | Last week. |
| 6 | <p style="text-align: center;">How long have you known each other?
When did you first meet each other?</p> | 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
I've I woke up.
- 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.

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

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)