

# how long have you (been) ... ?

**A** Study this example situation:



Dan and Kate are married. They got married exactly 20 years ago, so today is their 20th wedding anniversary.

They **have been** married **for 20 years**.

We say: They **are** married. (*present*)

*but* How long have they **been** married?  
(*not* How long are they married?)  
They **have been** married **for 20 years**. (*present perfect*)  
(*not* They are married for 20 years)

We use the *present perfect* to talk about something that began in the past and still continues now.

Compare the *present* and *present perfect*:

- Paul is in hospital.  
*but* He's **been** in hospital **since Monday**. (= He **has** been ...)  
(*not* Paul is in hospital since Monday)
- We **know** each other very well.  
*but* We've **known** each other **for a long time**.  
(*not* We know)
- Do they **have** a car?  
*but* How long **have** they **had** their car?
- She's **waiting** for somebody.  
*but* She **hasn't been waiting** very long.

*present*  
he is  
we know  
do they have  
she is waiting

*present perfect*  
he has been  
we have known  
have they had  
she has been waiting



**B** I've known / I've had / I've lived etc. is the *present perfect simple*.  
I've been learning / I've been waiting etc. is the *present perfect continuous*.

When we ask or say 'how long', the continuous is more usual (see Unit 10):

- I've **been learning** English **since January**.
- It's **been raining** all morning.
- Richard **has been doing** the same job **for 20 years**.
- 'How long **have** you **been driving**?' 'Since I was 17.'

Some verbs (for example, **know** and **like**) are not normally used in the continuous:

- How long **have** you **known** Jane? (*not* have you been knowing)
- I've **had** these shoes for ages. (*not* I've been having)

See also Units 4A and 10C. For **have**, see Unit 17.

**C** You can use either the continuous or simple with **live** and **work**:

- Julia **has been living** in this house for a long time. *or* Julia **has lived** ...
- How long **have** you **been working** here? *or* How long **have** you **worked** here?

But we use the simple (**have lived** etc.) with **always**:

- I've **always lived** in the country. (*not* always been living)

**D** We say 'I haven't (done something) **since/for** ...' (*present perfect simple*):

- I **haven't seen** Tom since Monday. (= Monday was the last time I saw him)
- Sarah **hasn't phoned** for ages. (= the last time she phoned was ages ago)

# Exercises

## 11.1 Which is right?

- 1 Ben is a friend of mine. I know / ~~I've known~~ him very well. (I know is correct)
- 2 I like your house. How long do you live / have you lived here?
- 3 You'll need an umbrella if you go out now. It's raining / It's been raining.
- 4 The weather is / has been awful since I arrived here.
- 5 I'm sorry I'm late. Are you waiting / Have you been waiting long?
- 6 We've moved. We're living / We've been living in New Street now.
- 7 I met Maria only recently. I don't know / I haven't known her very long.
- 8 Lisa is in Germany. She's / She's been there on a business trip.
- 9 That's a very old bike. How long do you have / have you had it?
- 10 I'm not feeling good. I'm feeling / I've been feeling ill all day.

## 11.2 Read the situations and write questions using the words in brackets.

- 1 A friend tells you that Paul is in hospital. You ask him:  
(how long / Paul / hospital?) How long has Paul been in hospital?
- 2 You know that Jane is a good friend of Katherine's. You ask Jane:  
(how long / you / know / Katherine?) .....
- 3 Your friend's sister went to Australia some time ago and she's still there. You ask your friend:  
(how long / sister / in Australia?) .....
- 4 You meet a woman who tells you that she teaches English. You ask her:  
(how long / you / teach / English?)  
.....
- 5 Tom always wears the same jacket. It's very old. You ask him:  
(how long / you / have / that jacket?) .....
- 6 You are talking to a friend about Joe, who now works at the airport. You ask your friend:  
(how long / Joe / work / airport?)  
.....
- 7 You meet somebody on a plane. She says that she lives in Chicago. You ask her:  
(you / always / live / in Chicago?) .....

## 11.3 Complete B's answers to A's questions.

- | A  | B   |
|--|---|
| 1 Paul is in hospital, isn't he?             | Yes, he <u>has been</u> in hospital since Monday.                     |
| 2 Do you see Lisa very often?                | No, I <u>haven't seen</u> her for three months.                       |
| 3 Is Paul married?                           | Yes, he ..... married for ten years.                                  |
| 4 Is Amy married?                            | Yes, she ..... married to a German guy.                               |
| 5 Do you still play tennis?                  | No, I ..... tennis for years.   |
| 6 Are you waiting for the bus?               | Yes, I ..... for about 20 minutes.                                    |
| 7 You know Mel, don't you?                   | Yes, we ..... each other a long time.                                 |
| 8 Jack is never ill, is he?                  | No, he ..... ill since I've known him.                                |
| 9 Martin lives in Italy, doesn't he?         | Yes, he ..... in Milan.   |
| 10 Sue lives in Berlin, doesn't she?         | Yes, she ..... in Berlin for many years.                              |
| 11 Is Joe watching TV?                       | Yes, he ..... TV all evening.   |
| 12 Do you watch TV a lot?                    | No, I ..... TV since last weekend.                                    |
| 13 Do you have a headache?                   | Yes, I ..... a headache all morning.                                  |
| 14 Do you go to the cinema a lot?            | No, I ..... to the cinema for ages.                                   |
| 15 Would you like to go to New York one day? | Yes, I ..... to go to New York.<br>(use <b>always</b> / <b>want</b> ) |