


# UNIT 18

## Present perfect (I have done / I have been doing) with how long, for and since

a) Study this example situation:



Bob and Alice are married. They got married exactly 20 years ago. So today is their 20th wedding anniversary. They **have been married for 20 years.**

We use the present perfect to say how long something has existed or how long something has been happening.

They are married. { How long have they been married?  
They **have been married for 20 years.**

b) We use the present perfect continuous (I have been doing) to say how long something has been happening. Note that the action is still happening now:

- I've **been learning** English for a long time.
- Sorry I'm late. **Have you been waiting long?**
- It's **been raining since** I got up this morning.

Sometimes the action is a repeated action (see also Unit 16b):

- Tom **has been driving for ten** years.
- **How long have you been smoking?**

The continuous (I have been doing) or the simple (I have done) can be used for actions repeated over a long period:

- I've **been collecting** / I've collected stamps since I was a child.

c) We use the simple (I have done) for situations that exist for a long time (especially if we say always). Note that the situation still exists now:

- My father **has always worked** hard. (*not* 'has always been working')

We use the continuous for situations over a shorter time. Compare:

- John **has been living** in London **since January.**
- John **has always lived** in London.

d) Some verbs (for example be, have, know) are not normally used in the continuous (see Unit 3b for a list and Unit 24 for have):

- How long **have** Bob and Alice **been married?**
- Tom **has had** a cold for the past week. (*not* 'has been having')
- Tom and I **have known** each other since we were at school.

e) Do not use the present simple (I do) or continuous (I am doing) to say how long something has been happening:

- I've **been waiting** here for an hour. (*not* 'I am waiting')
- How long **have you known** Tom? (*not* 'do you know')

# UNIT 18 Exercises

18.1 Are these sentences right or wrong? Correct the ones which are wrong.

Examples: How long have Bob and Alice been married? RIGHT  
I know Bob for five years. WRONG - have known

- 1 Sue and Alan are married since July. ....
- 2 It is raining all day. ....
- 3 How long has George been unemployed? .....
- 4 Have you always been living in this house? .....
- 5 How long has Ken a beard? .....
- 6 How long do you know Ann? .....
- 7 She has been ill for quite a long time. ....

18.2 This time you have to write questions with how long?

Examples: Jim is learning Chinese. How long has he been learning Chinese?  
I know Bob. How long have you known Bob?

- 1 My sister is married. How long .....
- 2 Boris is on holiday. How long .....
- 3 I live in Glasgow. ....
- 4 It is snowing. ....
- 5 Jack smokes. ....
- 6 I know about her problem. ....
- 7 Jack and Jill are looking for a flat. ....
- 8 Diana teaches English in Germany. ....
- 9 Dennis is in love with Margaret. ....
- 10 Colin has a car. ....

18.3 In this exercise you have to read a sentence and then write another sentence with since or for.

Example: I know Bob. (for five years) I have known Bob for five years.

- 1 Jack lives in Bolton. (since he was born) Jack .....
- 2 Bill is unemployed. (since April) Bill .....
- 3 Ann has a bad cold. (for the last few days) .....
- 4 I want to go to the moon. (since I was a child) .....
- 5 My brother is studying languages at university. (for two years) .....
- 6 Tim and Jane are working in Sheffield. (since February) .....
- 7 My cousin is in the army. (since he was 17) .....
- 8 They are waiting for us. (for half an hour) .....