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.
(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.
  - He’s been in hospital since Monday. (= He has been …)
  - (not Paul is in hospital since Monday)

- We know each other very well.
  - We’ve known each other for a long time.
  - (not We know)

- Do they have a car?
  - How long have they had their car?

- She’s waiting for somebody.
  - She hasn’t been waiting very long.

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.

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)

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)
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?) ___________ How long have you known 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?) ___________ How long has your sister been in Australia?

4 You meet a woman who tells you that she teaches English. You ask her:
   (how long / you / teach / English?) ___________ How long have you been teaching English?

5 Tom always wears the same jacket. It's very old. You ask him:
   (how long / you / have / that jacket?) ___________ How long have you had 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?) ___________ How long has Joe been working at the airport?

7 You meet somebody on a plane. She says that she lives in Chicago. You ask her:
   (you / always / live / in Chicago?) ___________ Have you always / Do you always live in Chicago?

11.3 Complete B’s answers to A’s questions.

Paul is in hospital, isn't he?
Yes, he ___________ in hospital since Monday.
No, I ___________ her for three months.

Do you see Lisa very often?
Yes, he _____________________ married for ten years.
No, I _____________________ married to a German guy.

Is Paul married?
Yes, he _____________________ married to a German guy.
No, I _____________________ married for ten years.

Is Amy married?
Yes, she _____________________ married for ten years.
No, I _____________________ a German guy.

Do you still play tennis?
Yes, he _____________________ for about 20 minutes.
No, I _____________________ for 20 years.

Are you waiting for the bus?
Yes, we _____________________ each other a long time.
No, he _____________________ each other a long time.

You know Mel, don’t you?
Yes, he _____________________ in Milan.
No, he _____________________ in Milan.

Jack is never ill, is he?
Yes, he _____________________ in Berlin for many years.
No, he _____________________ in Berlin for many years.

Martin lives in Italy, doesn’t he?
Yes, he _____________________ in Berlin for many years.
No, he _____________________ in Berlin for many years.

Sue lives in Berlin, doesn’t she?
Yes, he _____________________ TV all evening.
No, I _____________________ TV since last weekend.

Is Joe watching TV?
Yes, he _____________________ a headache all morning.
No, I _____________________ a headache all morning.

Do you watch TV a lot?
Yes, he _____________________ to the cinema for ages.
No, I _____________________ to the cinema for ages.

Do you have a headache?
Yes, I _____________________ to go to New York.
No, I _____________________ to go to New York.

Would you like to go to New York one day?
Yes, I _____________________ to go to New York.
No, I _____________________ to go to New York.

(use always / want)