Hi! I am Marianne Raynaud, and I am here to help you improve your level of spoken English. For-Since-Ago are three words that appear regularly in all international language tests. I hope the following explanations and oral exercises will help you understand the use of these words and enable you to employ them correctly when speaking or writing.

Let’s simplify. “For” is used with the present perfect tense to describe an action, which started in the past and has continued up to present time, the time at which the person is speaking. “For” is followed by a duration or length of time.

Listen and repeat these expressions with “for”.

- for 3 years
- for 6 months
- for half an hour
- for a long time
- for many years
- for longer than expected

Now listen and repeat these sentences with the present perfect tense followed by “for”.

I have lived here for 3 years.
I have repaired the house for 6 months.
I have listened to the radio for half an hour.
I have studied here for many years.
I have worked here for a long time.
I have painted the gate for longer than expected.

If you want to insist on the fact that the action, which started in the past, is still continuing in the present, then you should use the progressive form of the present perfect. You were doing something in the past, and now in the present you continue doing the same thing. Listen and repeat.

I have been living here for 3 years.
I have been repairing the house for 6 months.
I have been listening to the radio for half an hour.
I have been studying here for many years.
I have been working here for a long time.
I have been painting the gate for longer than expected.

Now let’s look at “since”. “Since” is also used with the present perfect tense to describe an action, which started in the past and has continued up to the present. “Since” is followed by an indication of the date or time when an action started. Listen and repeat these expressions with “since”.

- since 2011
- since October 30
- since noon
- since last year
- since 9:30
- since I arrived
Now listen and repeat whole sentences with “since”.

I have lived here since 2011. I have studied here since last year.
I have repaired the house since October 30th. I have worked here since I arrived.
I have listened to the radio since noon. I have painted the gate since 9:30.

If you want to emphasize the fact that the action started in the past and is still continuing in the present, you should use the progressive form of the present perfect. You have been doing something in the past, and in the present you continue doing the same thing. Listen and repeat.

I have been living here since 2011. I have been studying here since last year.
I have been repairing the house since October 30th. I have been working here since I arrived.
I have been listening to the radio since noon. I have been painting the gate since 9:30.

Now let’s do an exercise to practice the difference between “for” and “since”. I will say an expression and you will repeat this expression with either “for” or “since”. Listen to the examples.

I say: 3 years
You say: for 3 years
I say: 2011
You say: since 2011
I say: longer than expected
You say: for longer than expected
I say: noon
You say: since noon

Now you go on in the same way.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3 years</th>
<th>October 30th</th>
<th>a long time</th>
<th>last year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>for 3 years</td>
<td>since October 30th</td>
<td>for a long time</td>
<td>since last year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>I arrived</td>
<td>half an hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>since 2011</td>
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<td>since I arrived</td>
<td>for half an hour</td>
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<tr>
<td>noon</td>
<td>9:30</td>
<td>many years</td>
<td>longer than expected</td>
</tr>
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<td>since noon</td>
<td>since 9:30</td>
<td>for many years</td>
<td>for longer than expected</td>
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Finally, a few words about “ago”. “Ago” is used to describe an action that occurred in the past and is over, completed or finished. It is used with the simple past tense but NEVER with the present perfect. “Ago” is followed by an indication of the time between the event in the past and the moment when the person is speaking. Listen and repeat these expressions with “ago”.

3 years ago 6 months ago 2 days ago half an hour ago

And repeat these sentences in the simple past with “ago”.

I moved here 3 years ago. I received an e-mail from her 2 days ago.
I bought this house 6 months ago. I saw him half an hour ago.

That’s the end of our lesson. I hope it has helped you. Do check out our other series “Your English” and “5 Minute TOPs”. Bye for now and don’t forget to keep smiling!

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