

Asking Questions Using "How"

Difficulty Level: ★ ★ ☆ ☆ ☆

In this lesson we will learn to use "how" to effectively ask questions.

"How" for duration:

How long have you been _____ for?

We use "how" to ask when something has started in the past and continued up until now. [has/have + been + present participle]

1.) How long have you been studying English for?

I have been studying English for just shy of five years.

2.) How long have you guys been waiting for?

We've been waiting for just over 10 minutes.

3.) How long have you been a smoker for?

I've been a smoker for as long as I can remember.

"How" for frequency:

How often do you _____ ?

We use "how" to ask how frequent someone or something performs an action.

1.) How often do you study English?

I study English every evening, except on the weekends.

2.) How often do you have to wait for your mom to pick you up?

I rarely wait for my mom to pick me up. I usually only wait when she is stuck in traffic.

3.) How **often** do you smoke?

I'm a heavy smoker. I smoke every chance I get!

"How" for the length of the action:

How long do you usually _____ for?

We use "how long" when asking about the amount of time someone spends doing an action or activity.

1.) How **long** do you study English for every night?

I usually study English for about an hour to an hour and a half, depending on how tired I am.

2.) How **long** do you usually wait for your mother when she is late?

I rarely wait more than ten minutes but every once in a while I'm stuck waiting for up to half an hour.

3.) How **long** do you spend on your smoke breaks?

It depends who I am with. If I am smoking alone, I usually spend no longer than ten minutes on my break.

Using "how long" with the verb "take":

How long does it take to (verb) + noun?

We use this format of question to find out how long it takes to complete a specific action.

1.) How long does **it take** to learn a foreign language?

Everyone is different. However, for me it took me about 3 years to learn English. But I studied night and day.

2.) How long does **it take** to get to Busan from Seoul?

It takes about 3 hours by express bus, and just shy of 2 hours by train to get to Busan from Seoul.

3.) How long did **it take** you to lose all that weight?

It took me about 6 months to drop 10 lbs.

Using "how much & how many" for quantity, value, and weight:

We use this form: How many - How much + noun + is/are + subject.

For uncountable nouns use "how much + noun + is + subject" (How much milk is in the fridge?)

For countable nouns use - "how many + noun + are + subject" (How many apples are in the fridge.)

1.) How **much** does that watch cost?

That watch costs \$150.

2.) How **many** lunches should I prepare for the trip?

You should prepare about 15 lunches for the trip.

3.) How **many** people will attend the seminar?

We are expecting about 50 to 70 people to attend the seminar.

4.) How **much** did you spend on your trip to Busan?

I spent just under \$500 on my trip to Busan.

5.) How **much** does your package weigh?

My package weighs exactly 10 lbs.

6.) How **much** should I spend on a gift for my girlfriends birthday?

You shouldn't spend more than \$100 dollars on your girlfriends gift.

Tips:

When you are asked a "how" question, pay attention to the key words in the questions: "have you been", "how often", "how long" "how much".

ESL students tend to incorrectly hear "how" questions.

Native speakers often use contractions when speaking. I have = I've, we have = we've, they have = they've. Try to use contractions to answer the following questions.

Practice Questions:

Answer the questions in full sentences.

- 1.) How long have you been married for?
- 2.) How often do you and your friends go out for drinks?
- 3.) How long do you usually watch television for every night?
- 4.) How long does it take to finish your daily chores?
- 5.) How much does it cost to buy a new laptop online compared to in a local store?
- 6.) How many close friends do you have and how often do you see them?
- 7.) How long will you date before getting married and how many children do you plan on having?

What is the question to these answers?

- 1.) I think about twenty co-workers will attend the party.
- 2.) She just started doing yoga this month, actually.
- 3.) I drove really fast and got to Busan in less than 3 hours.
- 4.) I hit the gym for an hour a day rain or shine.
- 5.) I only study English on the weekends.

Daily Expressions & Idioms:

- 1.) **"Straighten (it) out"**: Means to solve a problem.

"I have to contact our client this afternoon and straighten out the problems with the budget."

- 2.) **"Give in"**: Means to stop resisting and agree with someone else.

"I finally gave in to my wife and let her buy an expensive handbag." "No matter how often I ask my boss, he never gives in to let me go home early."

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