

Common English Patterns: Part 1

Difficulty Level: ★ ★ ★ ★ ☆

Here is the first part to a collection of commonly used English patterns that will help you break away from basic English and help you sound more natural in your English speaking.

1.) How long's it been since...

We use this English pattern to ask someone when was the last time they did something, or went somewhere. We often respond with "*the last time I... (verb-past tense)*."

a.) How long's it been since you visited your parents?

The last time I visited my parent's house was last year for the holidays.

b.) You're still single right? How long's it been since you went on a date?

The last time I went on a date was over 3 months ago. I've got no time due to work and my studies.

c.) You're always working these days. How long's it been since your company gave you a day-off?

I can't even recall the last time I had a day-off. I think the last time I had a day-off was several weeks ago.

2.) What's the difference (between / if / with regards to).

This English pattern is very common when we are comparing similar things. It is very useful in creating questions.

We often use the English pattern, "The main difference is..." when responding to this type of question.

a.) Excuse me, what's the difference between these two cameras?

The main difference between these two cameras is that this one is capable of shooting 4k video. While this one is only 1080p.

b.) Excuse me, what's the difference if I book my flight today or next month?

If you book today, in advance, we can offer you our early booking price, which is a 15% discount, instead of paying full price.

3.) Where's a good place to...(base form of verb) / Where's the best place to...(base form of verb).

This is probably the easiest and most common way to ask for a recommendation about somewhere to go. Usually it is followed with the base form of a verb.

A simple way of responding to this question is: "I'd have to say _____ is the best place to go for... / I think _____ is a good place _____."

a.) Where's a good place **to meet** women. I just broke up with my girlfriend, and I've been out of the dating game for a while.

*The best place **to meet women** is the clubbing district downtown. Lot's of singles head there after work for cocktails.*

b.) You're a photographer. I'm interested in buying a new mirror-less camera for my trip overseas. Where's the best place **to buy** electronics and cameras?

*I'd have to say the best place **to buy** a camera is on amazon. I got my camera on amazon for about 15% cheaper than the local camera shop.*

4.) I've had enough of...

An easy way of letting someone know you are tired of something or someone. It is often followed by a pronoun / preposition + a verb in -ing form (progressive aspect).

a.) I'm thinking about getting a new job, I've had enough of teaching in Korea. It's time to consider my options and future.

I've had enough of teaching in Korea too, but my friends and girlfriend live here. It's a tough choice.

b.) Haven't you had enough of her constant complaining?

Yeah, but she's my sister, what am I supposed to do?

c.) I saw your boyfriend at Club 41 last night, he was dancing with some girls.

He told me he had to work a night shift. I've had enough of his lies. We're done!

Tips:

1.) Get in the habit of using contractions in your speech; contractions are shortened versions of words (I cannot = I can't). It's more natural in daily conversation.

For example, native speakers rarely say: "Where is the..." instead native speakers say: "Where's the..."

"How long has it been..." becomes "how long's it been..." and "where is a..." becomes "where's a..." However, if you are writing an essay for an IELTS test, don't use contractions. In formal writing contractions are not appropriate.

2.) Many ESL students, especially Koreans tend to confuse the phrase "holiday" with "day-off". In English we use the word "holiday" for special dates such as Christmas or Thanksgiving, or when we don't have to work for several or more days in a row. We say we are "on holidays" if we are traveling somewhere. For example, "I'm going to Croatia on my holidays this summer."

We use "day off" when we don't have to work for a single day. For example, "I got the day off this Thursday, and in two weeks I start my holidays."

Quiz:

What is the question to the following sentences below?

- 1.) The last time I went to Seoul was for my job interview last month.
- 2.) I couldn't tell you. I don't know much about computers.
- 3.) Samsung uses Android, while Apple uses IOS.
- 4.) The best place to go hiking is definitely Halla mountain in Jeju.
- 5.) I haven't had a day off in weeks.
- 6.) Yeah, I'm sick of my job too.
- 7.) Seoul is more crowded, less friendly and reminds me of New York, while Busan is a little slower paced and reminds me more of California.
- 8.) I'd say Myeongdong is a good place for shopping. They also have a lot of delicious street food.

Match:

Match the words from column 1 with the best-suited answer from column 2.

Column 1	Column 2
1.) district	a.) remember
2.) I've had enough...	b.) going on a vacation/trip.
3.) how long's it been since...	c.) working throughout the night (ex. 9 pm-5 am)
4.) contraction	d.) I'm tired of...
5.) recall	e.) When's the last time...
6.) day off	f.) shortened version

Column 1	Column 2
7.) holiday	g.) when you don't work for a single day.
8.) on holidays	h.) area
9.) night shift	i.) national, religious or memorial day

Daily Expressions, Phrasal Verbs & Idioms:

1.) **"To blow out of proportion"**: Means to make a small problem into a much bigger problem; to exaggerate.

*My boss blow's every mistake I make **out of proportion**. I was only ten minutes late.*

*He is only a little bit late boss; you're **blowing it out of proportion**.*

2.) **"To fall behind"**: When you are not doing well in something, or not up to date.

*I'm **falling behind** in my English studies; the course is too difficult for me.*

*We have to work over time this week because if we keep **falling behind** we will never meet the project deadline.*