Student Notes: Present Perfect with For and Since

Summary

The present perfect tense is used to talk about actions or states that began in the past and continue up to the present or have relevance now. This tense often emphasizes the connection between past events and the present moment. When using the present perfect with **for** and **since**, these words help specify the duration or starting point of an action or state.

- **For**: Refers to a length or duration of time (e.g., "for two hours," "for five years"). It answers the question How long?.
- **Since**: Refers to a specific point in time (e.g., "since 2020," "since Monday"). It answers the question From when?.

Formula

The structure for the present perfect tense is: **Subject + have/has + past participle**

- **Have** is used with plural subjects (e.g., I, we, you, they).
- **Has** is used with singular subjects (e.g., he, she, it).
- The **past participle** is the third form of a verb (e.g., "worked," "gone," "been").

Usage of For and Since

For

For is used to describe a duration or length of time. It tells us how long something has been happening. The word "for" is commonly followed by phrases that indicate a period of time, such as hours, days, months, years, centuries, or even indefinite periods like "a long time."

Detailed Explanation:

- Use **for** when you want to emphasize the total amount of time that has passed.
- It does not specify when the action started but focuses on how long it has continued.

Examples:

1. I have lived in this city **for five years**.
   (This means I started living in this city five years ago and still live here.)

2. She has worked at that company **for three months**.
   (She started working three months ago and is still employed there.)

3. We have been waiting **for an hour**.
   (We started waiting one hour ago and are still waiting now.)

4. They have studied English **for a long time**.
   *(This emphasizes that they have been studying English for an extended period.)

Since

Since is used to refer to a specific starting point in time. It tells us when an action began and implies that it continues into the present moment. The word "since" is followed by a specific date, day, month, year, or event.

Detailed Explanation:

- Use **since** when you want to pinpoint the exact moment an action began.
- It provides clarity about when something started and emphasizes its continuity.

Examples:

1. I have lived in this city **since 2020**.
   (This means I started living in this city in 2020 and still live here.)

2. She has worked at that company **since January**.
   (She started working there in January and remains employed.)

3. We have been waiting **since 6 PM**.
   (We started waiting at 6 PM and are still waiting now.)

4. They have studied English **since their childhood**.
   *(This highlights that they began studying English during their childhood and continue to do so.)

Comparison Between For and Since

Word	Function	Explanation	Example Sentence
For	Duration of time	Indicates how long an action has been happening without specifying when it began.	"I have studied English for three years."
Since	Starting point in time	Specifies when an action began and implies its continuation into the present moment.	"I have studied English since 2020."

Common Mistakes

Mistake 1: Mixing up for and since

Learners often confuse these two words because both describe time-related actions. Remember: - Use **for** for durations (lengths of time). - Use **since** for specific starting points.

Incorrect Example:

I have lived here since five years.
Correct Example:
I have lived here for five years.

Mistake 2: Using the wrong verb tense

The present perfect tense must be used when describing actions continuing from the past into the present with "for" or "since." Avoid using other tenses incorrectly.

Incorrect Example:

I am living here for five years.
Correct Example:
I have lived here for five years.

By understanding how to use **for** and **since**, you can express time-related actions clearly and confidently in English! Practice identifying whether you're describing a duration (how long?) or a starting point (from when?) to choose the right word.