1. Patterns of Time Duration

I. SBJ+Duration+negative V+O+(了) "SBJ haven't V+O for Duration"

->a. 我兩年沒運動了。
       I haven't exercised for 2 years.

b. He hasn't come home for 8 years.

c. I haven't seen a movie for a long time.

d. My older brother hasn't been to the library for 3 weeks.

e. 他三天不能上課。

f. 妹妹兩個月不能看電視。

g. 我的同學兩個星期不能用電話。

h. 去年我朋友半年沒給她父母打電話。

i. 昨天老高一天沒吃飯。

j. 上個學期小李半個月沒學習。

CAUTION:

When using this pattern, you should be careful about when to use the particle "了".

A. Examples b, c, and d describe actions that have not occurred for sometime up to the present, where 沒 co-occurs with 了;

B. e, f, and g indicate that an action cannot be performed for sometime in the future, where 了 is not necessary and the negative form of the verb should be 不 V;

C. h, i, j all describe past situations, therefore in all three sentences verbs co-occur with 沒, but 了 is not necessary.

II SBJ + V+ Duration+ (的) + O "SBJ V+O for Duration"

->a. 他每天都看兩個小時的電視。
       Every day he watches TV for two hours.

b. 他念了兩個鐘頭的中文了，他再也不要念了！

c. 王朋吃了一年的美國飯，很想回家吃媽媽做的中國飯。

d. They have been driving for two hours but still can't find Chinatown.

e. Her son plays piano three hours every day.
f. My classmates speak listen to Chinese audio tapes 10 hours every week. Their pronunciations are as good as the Chinese!

CAUTION:

There are some verbs in Chinese that are not durational action verbs. Either the actions they represent are instantaneous, or they represent a mental state that does not fit into the category of action verbs. On other occasions, verbs cannot be separated from their objects. In all these cases, we cannot use the pattern listed above. Rather, we have to use the following pattern:

SBJ+ V+O+Duration+ (了)

A. Examples of non-durational action verbs include:

畢業，結婚，離婚，知道，認識，會。

B. When the object is a person or a place, we often cannot separate the verb from the object.

g. 他大學畢業三年了。
h. 他們結婚八個月了。
i. 你知道多久了？
j. How long has it been since you knew how to drive?
k. I have known how to speak Chinese since 2 years ago.
m. 他離開北京五天了。

n. 我認識王朋十二年了。
o. It's been a week since I told you.
p. They have lived in Swarthmore for 2 months.

2. Passive Structure

->a. 那麼多人都壓在一起，下面的人不是要被壓壞了嗎？
So many people on top of one another. Wouldn't the one underneath be crushed to pieces?

NOTES:

In Chinese, passive structures are not as often used as in English, usually only when the situation is unpleasant or negative, and only when the receiver of the action is deeply affected by the action. Furthermore, the passive marker 被 can be replaced by less formal words such as 讓・叫・給 etc. We will learn more about passive sentences
when we start with the textbook of Level Two. Now, you try to say the following in Chinese.

b. Dinner was cooked.

c. The book we need has been borrowed.

d. The piece of cake was eaten by the cat.

e. The letter was mailed out yesterday.

f. The letter was lost in the mail.

g. These three dogs were raised by my grandfather.

h. I was told that if you have eaten spoiled food, you had better go see a doctor. Otherwise, your will have an awful stomachache, and you will have to go to the bathroom many times.