“STILL”, “YET” AND “ALREADY”: TIME

“Still”, “yet” and “already” can all be used to talk about things which are going on, or expected, around the present. Briefly:

- “Still” is used to say that something is continuing and has not stopped:
- “Yet” is used to talk about something that is expected;
- “Already” is used to say that something has happened early, or earlier than it might have happened.

### STILL

“Still” is used to say that something has, perhaps surprisingly, not finished. It usually goes with the verb, in mid–position:

- *She’s still asleep.*
- *Is it still raining?*
- *I’ve been thinking for hours, but I still can’t decide.*
- *You’re not still seeing that Jackson boy, are you?*

### YET

“Not yet” is used to say that something which is expected has not happened (but we think that it will).

- The postman hasn’t come yet.

In questions, we use “yet” to ask whether something expected has happened.

- *Is supper ready yet?*
- *Has the postman come yet?*

“Yet” usually goes at the end of a clause, but it can go immediately after “not” in a formal style.

- *Don’t eat the pears – they aren’t ripe yet.*
- The pears are not yet ripe. (more formal)

### ALREADY

“Already” is used to say that something has happened earlier than expected, or earlier than it might have happened. It usually goes with the verb, in mid–position, but it can also go at the end of a clause, for emphasis:

- –When’s Sally going to come? –She’s already here.
- –You must go to Scotland. –I’ve already been there.
- Have you already finished? That was quick!
- Are you here already? You must have run all the way.

We do not usually put already before time expressions.

- When I was fourteen I already knew that I wanted to be a doctor. (NOT Already when I was fourteen ...)
- In 1970 Britain’s car industry was already in serious trouble. (NOT Already in 1970 ...)
“YET” OR “ALREADY” IN QUESTIONS

Questions with “already” often suggest that something has happened. Compare:

- Have you met Professor Hawkins yet? (= I don’t know whether you’ve met him.)
- Have you already met Professor Hawkins? (= I think you’ve probably met him.)
- Is my coat dry yet? (= I don’t know whether it’s dry.)
- Is my coat dry already? That was quick! (= I think it’s dry. “Already” is at the end of the clause to express emphasis).

TENSES

Various tenses are possible with “still”, “yet” and “already”. In British English, perfect tenses are common with “already” and “yet”; Americans often use past tenses. Compare:

- Have you paid yet? (British English)
- Have you paid / Did you pay yet? (American English)
- She has already left. (British English)
- She (has) already left. (American English)

RELATED TO A PAST MOMENT

“Still”, “yet” and “already” can be related to a past moment instead of to the present:

- I went to see if she had woken up yet, but she was still asleep. This was embarrassing, because her friends had already arrived.

“STILL NOT” OR “NOT YET”?

“Still not” looks back towards the past; “not yet” looks towards the future. Compare:

- She still hasn’t got a job. (Looking back: she hasn’t had a job since Christmas, and this situation is continuing.)
- She hasn’t got a job yet. (Looking forward: she hasn’t got a job now, but we’re hoping that she will get one.)
- I still can’t speak French, after all these years of study.
- I can’t speak French yet, but I hope I will be able to soon.

“YET” MEANING “STILL”

“Yet” is normally used in questions and negative sentences. But it is sometimes used in affirmative sentences in a formal style to mean “still”.

- We have yet to hear from the bank. (= We are still waiting to hear …)

ALL READY

“All ready” is not the same as “already”: it simply means the same as “all” + “ready”. Compare:

- When’s Jane coming? –She’s already arrived.
- Are you all ready? –No, Pete isn’t.