ANSWER KEY WITH EXPLANATIONS

A While or Awhile Quiz: 20 Questions with Answers

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11	**C**	12	**D**	13	**A**	14	**A**	15	**C**	16	**A**	17	**B**	18	**B**	19	**D**	20	**D**

Explanations

1. In careful writing: I haven't been to the cinema for ___.
✔ **C) a while**
After a preposition such as for, careful writers use the noun phrase: for a while. Dictionaries note that awhile is increasingly used here too.

2. Take off your coat and stay ___.
✔ **D) awhile**
Awhile is an adverb that means for a short time. It comes straight after the verb.

3. In careful writing: we moved to this town ___ ago.
✔ **C) a while**
Before ago careful writers use a noun phrase, as in a year ago: a while ago. Dictionaries note that awhile is increasingly used this way too.

4. It's been ___ since we last spoke.
✔ **A) a while**
After be, a while is a thing, like a long time. Write two words.

5. ___ I was cooking, the phone rang.
✔ **B) While**
While on its own is a linking word that means during the time that.

6. Sit down and rest ___ before dinner.
✔ **A) awhile**
Rest awhile means rest for a short time. The adverb follows the verb.

7. In careful writing: my aunt comes to see us once in ___.
✔ **B) a while**
Once in a while is a fixed phrase. After the preposition in, careful writers use two words, although dictionaries note that awhile is increasingly used here too.

8. In careful writing: the film was good, but it took ___ to get going.
✔ **B) a while**
Take needs a noun phrase after it: it took a while, like it took an hour. Dictionaries note that awhile is increasingly used this way, but careful writers keep two words.

9. Is the evening course really worth your ___?
✔ **D) while**
The phrase is worth your while. Here while is a noun after your.

10. I'll be with you in a little ___.
✔ **B) while**
A little while. With little in the middle, the one-word form is impossible.

11. It was a very ___ trip, and we learnt a lot.
✔ **C) worthwhile**
The adjective worthwhile is one word. It means worth the time or effort.

12. Let's walk ___ and enjoy the evening air.
✔ **D) awhile**
Walk awhile means walk for a short time: an adverb after the verb.

13. In careful writing: after ___, the baby stopped crying.
✔ **A) a while**
After is a preposition here, so careful writers use the noun phrase: after a while. Dictionaries note that awhile is increasingly used here too.

14. That happened quite ___ back.
✔ **A) a while**
Quite a while means a long time, and a while back means some time ago.

15. The guests lingered ___ in the garden, then left.
✔ **C) awhile**
Lingered awhile means stayed for a short time. The adverb comes after the verb.

16. We ___ away the rainy afternoon playing board games.
✔ **A) whiled**
To while away time means to spend it in a slow, relaxed way. Here while is a verb, so the past form is whiled.

17. In careful writing: we heard a knock and, ___ later, the door opened.
✔ **B) a while**
Before later, careful writers keep two words, as in a minute later. Dictionaries note that awhile is sometimes used here too.

18. She smiled politely, but all the ___ she was planning her escape.
✔ **B) while**
All the while means during all that time. While is a noun here, after the.

19. We waited a long ___ for the last bus home.
✔ **D) while**
A long while means a long time. With long in the middle, while stands alone and awhile is impossible.

20. My brother loves football, ___ I prefer tennis.
✔ **D) while**
While is a linking word here: it joins two sentences and shows a difference between them. Awhile and a while can't join sentences.