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Grammar Reference

What time is it?

To ask about the time, we use the following questions:

What + time + is + it?
What + is + the time?

Example:

What time is it?
It's 5:20. (It's five twenty.)

There are a few ways to tell the time.

1. Say the hour first and then the minutes (hour + minutes)

Example:

7:45 (seven forty-five)
8:11 (It's eight eleven.)

Note: For minutes 01 through 09, you can say the letter "O" rather than "zero".

Example:

11:04 (eleven O-four.)
1:08 (It's one O-eight.)

2. Say the minutes first and then the hours. (minutes + past/to + hour)

For minutes 1-30, use "past/after" after the minutes.

Example:

7:15 fifteen minutes **past/after** seven
3:25 It's twenty five **past/after** three.

For minutes 31-59, use "to/before" after the minutes.

Example:

7:45 fifteen minutes **to/before eight**
8:55 It's five **to/before nine**.

Note:

When it is **15 minutes past** the hour, we usually say: **(a) quarter past**

Example:

9:15 It's (a) quarter past nine

When it is **15 minutes before** the hour, we usually say: **a quarter to**

2:45 It's (a) quarter to three

When it is **30 minutes past** the hour, we usually say: **half past**

5:30 It's half past five (but we can also say five thirty)

When there are **no minutes**, we use **o'clock**.

Example:

10:00 ten o'clock.
2:00 It's two o'clock.

Prepositions of time “At” and “In”

“At” is used for a precise time.

Example:

- at 6:30
- at 5 o'clock
- at 8 P.M.
- at noon
- at bedtime
- at sunrise

“In” is used with months, years, and long periods

Example:

- in May
- in summer
- in 1990
- in the morning
- in the afternoon
- in the evening