

## Vocabulary – Telling the Time

### 8 Rules for Telling the Time in Spoken English 1

1. Use **'It's'** not 'It is'. We usually measure time in **five-minute intervals**: five past, ten past, etc.
2. There are two ways to *tell* (not *say*) the time:  
**past** (up to half): five past, ten past, quarter past, twenty past, twenty-five past, half past, *and*  
**to** (up to the hour): twenty-five to, twenty to, quarter to, ten to, five to  
*or*, say the **two numbers** that you can see from left to right, e.g. 11:10: 'It's eleven ten.'
3. For the hour, use **'o'clock'**: 'It's four o'clock.' We don't say 'It's four.' *or* 'It's four hour.'
4. For numbers in between, we add **'minutes'**: six minutes past, etc. Say **'oh'** not zero: 14:04 = two oh four
5. If it is one or two minutes *before* an interval, use **'nearly'** / **'about'**: 04:09 = 'It's nearly ten past four.'  
If it is one or two minutes *after* an interval, use **'just gone'**: 04:11 = 'It's just gone ten past four.'
6. Don't say 'am' or 'pm'. Use **'in the morning / afternoon / evening / at night'** if necessary, unless the context makes it clear, e.g. we may have a class at 11 o'clock *in the morning*, but not 11 o'clock *at night*
7. Morning = 00:00-11:59; afternoon = 12:00-16:59; evening = 17:00-20:59; night = 21:00-23:59 (this may vary, e.g. in the summer it may feel like 21:30 is still *evening*, while in winter it definitely feels like *night*)
8. Don't tell the time using the 24-hour clock. Also, 00:00 = *midnight* and 12:00 = *midday* or *noon*. We say: **'It's midnight / midday'**, not *midnight at night / midday in the afternoon*. 00:10 = ten past midnight, 12:10 = ten past twelve [in the afternoon]

Write the following times correctly:

- |           |  |
|-----------|--|
| 1. 09:25  | It's twenty-five past nine in the morning. |
| 2. 01:05  | _____                                      |
| 3. 02:04  | _____                                      |
| 4. 04:15  | _____                                      |
| 5. 21:55  | _____                                      |
| 6. 02:10  | _____                                      |
| 7. 03:38  | _____                                      |
| 8. 20:50  | _____                                      |
| 9. 10:01  | _____                                      |
| 10. 00:00 | _____                                      |
| 11. 06:49 | _____                                      |
| 12. 12:35 | _____                                      |
| 13. 11:30 | _____                                      |
| 14. 13:44 | _____                                      |
| 15. 16:40 | _____                                      |
| 16. 07:20 | _____                                      |
| 17. 14:23 | _____                                      |
| 18. 15:00 | _____                                      |
| 19. 22:12 | _____                                      |
| 20. 18:45 | _____                                      |

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Answers:

1. **09:25** It's twenty-five past nine [in the morning]. / It's nine twenty-five [in the morning].
2. **01:05** It's five past one [in the morning]. / It's one oh five [in the morning].
3. **02:04** It's four minutes past two [in the morning]. / It's two oh four [in the morning]. /  
It's nearly five past two [in the morning]. / It's nearly two oh five [in the morning].
4. **04:15** It's quarter past four [in the morning]. / It's four fifteen [in the morning].
5. **21:55** It's five to ten [at night]. / It's nine fifty-five [at night].
6. **02:10** It's ten past two [in the morning]. / It's two ten [in the morning].
7. **03:38** It's twenty-two minutes to four [in the morning]. / It's three thirty-eight [in the morning]. /  
It's nearly twenty to four [in the morning]. / It's nearly three forty [in the morning].
8. **20:50** It's ten to nine [in the evening]. / It's eight fifty [in the evening].
9. **10:01** It's one minute past ten [in the morning]. / It's ten oh one [in the morning]. /  
It's just gone ten o'clock [in the morning].
10. **00:00** It's midnight.
11. **06:49** It's eleven minutes to seven [in the morning]. / It's six forty-nine [in the morning]. /  
It's nearly ten to seven [in the morning]. / It's nearly six fifty [in the morning].
12. **12:35** It's twenty-five to one [in the afternoon]. / It's twelve thirty-five [in the afternoon].
13. **11:30** It's half past eleven [in the morning]. / It's eleven thirty [in the morning].
14. **13:44** It's sixteen minutes to two [in the afternoon]. / It's one forty-four [in the afternoon]. /  
It's nearly quarter to two [in the afternoon]. / It's nearly one forty-five [in the afternoon].
15. **16:40** It's twenty to five [in the afternoon]. / It's four forty [in the afternoon].
16. **07:20** It's twenty past seven [in the morning]. / It's seven twenty [in the morning].
17. **14:23** It's twenty-three minutes past two [in the afternoon]. / It's two twenty-three [in the  
afternoon]. / It's nearly twenty-five past two [in the afternoon]. / It's nearly two twenty-  
five [in the afternoon].
18. **15:00** It's three o'clock [in the afternoon].
19. **22:12** It's twelve minutes past ten [at night]. / It's ten twelve [at night]. / It's just gone ten past  
ten [at night]. / It's just gone ten ten [at night].
20. **18:45** It's quarter to seven [in the evening]. / It's six forty-five [in the evening].