

## Vocabulary – Telling the Time

### 8 Rules for Telling the Time in Spoken English 2

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. 00:05  | It's five past midnight. |
| 2. 08:20  | _____                    |
| 3. 01:10  | _____                    |
| 4. 12:00  | _____                    |
| 5. 23:40  | _____                    |
| 6. 16:25  | _____                    |
| 7. 02:00  | _____                    |
| 8. 12:16  | _____                    |
| 9. 04:55  | _____                    |
| 10. 05:15 | _____                    |
| 11. 06:02 | _____                    |
| 12. 09:44 | _____                    |
| 13. 03:50 | _____                    |
| 14. 10:59 | _____                    |
| 15. 19:35 | _____                    |
| 16. 11:06 | _____                    |
| 17. 17:30 | _____                    |
| 18. 13:46 | _____                    |
| 19. 02:45 | _____                    |
| 20. 14:27 | _____                    |

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Answers:

1. **00:05** It's five past midnight. / It's midnight oh five.
2. **08:20** It's twenty past eight [in the morning]. / It's eight twenty [in the morning].
3. **01:10** It's ten past one [in the morning]. / It's one ten [in the morning].
4. **12:00** It's midday / noon.
5. **23:40** It's twenty to midnight [at night]. / It's eleven forty [at night].
6. **16:25** It's twenty-five past four [in the afternoon]. / It's four twenty-five [in the afternoon].
7. **02:00** It's two o'clock [in the morning].
8. **12:16** It's sixteen minutes past twelve [in the afternoon]. / It's twelve sixteen [in the afternoon]. / It's just gone quarter past twelve [in the afternoon]. / It's just gone twelve fifteen [in the afternoon].
9. **04:55** It's five to five [in the morning]. / It's four fifty-five [in the morning].
10. **05:15** It's quarter past five [in the morning]. / It's five fifteen [in the morning].
11. **06:02** It's two minutes past six [in the morning]. / It's six oh two [in the morning]. / It's just gone six o'clock [in the morning].
12. **09:44** It's sixteen minutes to ten [in the morning]. / It's nine forty-four [in the morning]. / It's nearly quarter to ten [in the morning]. / It's nearly nine forty-five [in the morning].
13. **03:50** It's ten to three [in the morning]. / It's three fifty [in the morning].
14. **10:59** It's one minute to eleven [in the morning]. / It's ten fifty-nine [in the morning]. / It's nearly eleven o'clock [in the morning].
15. **19:35** It's twenty-five to eight [in the evening]. / It's seven thirty-five [in the evening].
16. **11:06** It's six minutes past eleven [in the morning]. / It's eleven oh six [in the morning]. / It's just gone five past eleven [in the morning]. / It's just gone eleven oh five [in the morning].
17. **17:30** It's half past five [in the evening]. / It's five thirty [in the evening].
18. **13:46** It's fourteen minutes to two [in the afternoon]. / It's one forty-six [in the afternoon]. / It's just gone quarter to two [in the afternoon]. / It's just gone one forty-five [in the afternoon].
19. **02:45** It's quarter to three [in the morning]. / It's two forty-five [in the morning].
20. **14:27** It's twenty-seven minutes past two [in the afternoon]. / It's two twenty-seven [in the afternoon]. / It's just gone twenty-five past two [in the afternoon]. / It's just gone two twenty-five [in the afternoon].