In this article, we'll explain how to use dates and time correctly. You will also learn to talk about dates and time in different standard ways depending on the context and geographical location.

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## Dates

There are many ways to write a date in English. How you write it normally depends on where you live or whether you want to use the formal or informal date.

- 16 March 2017
- 16.03.17 (day first)
- March 16(th), 2017
- The 16th of March, 2017
- Tuesday March 16, 2017
- 03/16/17 (month first)


## Dates in British English

The most common way to write the date in British English is to put the day first, (optionally with the ordinal suffix '-st', '-nd', '-rd' or '-th'), then the month, and then the year.

- I was born on the 20th of April, 1983. (pronounced as 'the twentieth of April nineteen eighty three')
- I was born on 20-04-1983. (this format is usually used on forms, documents, etc.)


## Dates in American English

For writing the date in the United States, we can use several standard formats:

## Short Format

In the short format, you write the month first, then the day, and then the year after a comma:

- Jane was in Prague on January 4, 2013. (pronounced as 'January fourth, two thousand thirteen')


## Long Format

In the long format, write the day of the week and then the date in the short format:

- The meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, October 12, 2018. (pronounced as 'Tuesday, October twelfth, two thousand eighteen')


## Numerical Format

In the numerical format, replace the month, day, and year with numerals, and separate with slashes, full stops or hyphens:

- He graduated from the University on 05/30/1994. (also possible: 05.30.1994 or 05-30-1994)

Note: You should always be consistent when using any of these formats.
Watch this video to learn more about using dates:

## Telling the Time

We can write the time both numerically and in words.
There are two common ways of telling the time.

1. Say the hour first and then the minutes:

- 6:25-It's six twenty-five.
- 8:05-It's eight O-five. (the ' O ' stands for zero and is pronounced like a long 'o')
- 9:11-It's nine eleven.
- 2:34-It's two thirty-four.

2. Say the minutes first and then the hour.
(Minutes + 'past'/'to' + Hour)
For minutes 1-30 we use 'PAST' after the minutes. For minutes $31-59$ we use 'TO' after the minutes.

- 2:35-It's twenty-five to three.
- 11:20 - It's twenty past eleven.
- 4:18-It's eighteen past four.
- 8:51-It's nine (minutes) to nine.

When it is $\mathbf{1 5}$ minutes past the hour we normally say '(a) quarter past' + hour.

- 7:15-It's (a) quarter past seven.

When it is $\mathbf{1 5}$ minutes before the hour we normally say 'a quarter to' + hour.

- 12:45-It's (a) quarter to one.

Of course, we can also say 'seven fifteen' and 'twelve forty-five'.
When it is $\mathbf{3 0}$ minutes past the hour we normally say 'half past' + hour.

- 3:30-It's half past three.

Of course, we can also say 'three thirty'.

## O'clock

We use 'o'clock' when there are NO minutes i.e. when it's exactly on the hour.

- 10:00-It's ten o'clock.
- 5:00-It's five o'clock.

Sometimes it is written as ' 9 o'clock' (numeral + 'o'clock')

## Giving the Time

We use 'it is' or 'it's' to respond to the questions that ask for the time right now.

- It is half past five (5:30).
- It's ten to twelve (11:50).

We use the structure 'AT' + time when giving the time of a specific event in the future.

- The bus arrives at midday/noon/twelve o'clock (12:00).
- The flight leaves at a quarter to two/one forty-five (1:45).
- The concert begins at ten o'clock/10 o'clock. (10:00)


## A.M vs. P.M

In English ordinary speech, we normally use the twelve-hour clock.
To make it clear whether you mean a time before 12 o'clock noon or after 12 o'clock noon, we can use 'in the morning', 'in the afternoon', 'in the evening', 'at night'.

- He came at a quarter past three (3:15) in the morning.

In more formal situations, we use a.m. (a.m = at morning) for the morning and p.m. (p.m = past morning) for the afternoon and night.

- 3a.m = Three o'clock in the morning.
- 3p.m = Three o'clock in the afternoon.

Note: Normally, a period separates the letters as they are acronyms, but it is also common to forego adding the commas and just write 'am' and 'pm'.
Remember: 12p.m is noon or midday, or 'lunchtime' as it is commonly called, while 12a.m is 'midnight' even though it is technically the first hour of the morning.

See also:

C GRAMMARTOP

Numerals: Cardinal and Ordinal Numbers

