

The Time

Knowing how to tell time is an important skill to master in any language, as time plays such an important role in our everyday lives. We need it in order to plan meetings at work, make dates, or plan a schedule - really for just about everything!

Luckily, it's not so difficult to tell time in German. Here we'll introduce you to the most important phrases and examples you need in order to tell time. So, brush up on your numbers and then let's get started!

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Asking for the Time

Below, we've collected essential phrases that you can use to ask questions about time. Use them to find out what time it is now, when something is happening, and more!

German

Wie spät ist es?
Weißt du wie spät es ist?
Hast du die Uhrzeit?
Kannst du mir die Uhrzeit sagen?
Wann möchtest du dich treffen?
Um wie viel Uhr geht der Flug?
Wie lange wird dieser Flug dauern?
Wie lange dauert dieser Kurs?
Wann sollten wir bereit sein zu gehen?

English

What time is it?
Do you know what time it is?
Do you have the time?
Could you tell me the time?
When do you want to meet?
What time does the flight leave?
How long is this flight going to take?
How long will this class take?
When should we be ready to go?

Um wie viel Uhr geht der Flug? (*What time does the flight leave?*)

To ask what time something is begin your question with Um wie viel Uhr. Here is another example using this: Um wie viel Uhr fängt das Fußballspiel an? (*What time does the soccer game start?*). An example response to Um wie viel Uhr geht der Flug? is: Der Flug startet gegen 15 Uhr (*The flight leaves around 3:00 pm in the afternoon*).

Wie lange wird dieser Flug dauern? (*How long is this flight going to take?*)

To find out how long something is going to take, use the sentence pattern Wie lange wird + AKTIVITÄT + dauern? (*How long is + ACTIVITY + going to take?*). Here is another example: Wie lange wird das Treffen dauern? (*How long is the meeting going to take?*). You could also use the questions Wie lange dauert das? (*How long will this take?*) or Wie viel Zeit braucht das? (*How long will this last?*) to ask the same thing. A typical response would look something like this: Es dauert ungefähr eine Stunde (*It will take about an hour*).

Telling the Time

Knowing how to say what time it is, is just as important as being able to ask for the time. Here you'll find phrases and examples that will help you do this. Have a look and use them whenever someone asks you for the time!



German

Es ist genau 12 Uhr.

Es ist fast vier Uhr.

Es ist 9:30 Uhr.

Es ist halb zehn.

Es ist gegen 15:45 Uhr.

Es ist Viertel nach drei.

Es ist 5:45 Uhr.

Es ist 12:45 Uhr.

Die Fahrt wird etwa zwei Stunden dauern.



English

It's exactly 12 o'clock.

It's almost four o'clock.

It's 9:30 am.

It's half past nine.

It's around 3:45 pm.

It's quarter after three.

It's 5:45 am.

It's 12:45 pm.

The drive will take about two hours.

 **German**

Das Abendessen ist um 19 Uhr.

Die Zeit vergeht wie im Flug!

 **English**

Dinner is at seven o'clock.

Time is flying by!

Es ist gegen 15:45 Uhr (*It's around 3:45 pm*)

All German-speaking countries use a 24 hour system to tell the time, instead of the 12 hour system that most English-speaking countries use. Because of this, you don't need to worry about saying "am" and "pm." Instead simply use the numbers 13-24 to specify that the time you are talking about occurs in the afternoon or evening. So, for example, in German, 9:00 am is simply 9:00 Uhr, but 9:00 pm is 21:00 Uhr. Note that 24 Uhr (midnight) is also commonly referred to as 0 Uhr, since the counter is set back to 0 at midnight. An example response to Es ist gegen 15:45 Uhr: Oh nein, ich glaube, ich komme zu spät zu meiner nächsten Unterrichtsstunde! (*Oh no, I think I'm going to be late for my next class!*).

Es ist Viertel nach drei (*It's quarter after three*)

This sentence is another way to say: Es ist 3:15 Uhr (*It's 3:15*). Viertel nach and Viertel vor are commonly used when telling time. Viertel nach can be used when you would say es ist fünfzehn Minuten nach..., while viertel vor is used when you would say es ist fünfzehn Minuten vor.... Note that another way to express viertel vor is drei viertel plus the next full hour. For example: Es ist drei viertel 8 (*It's 7:45 am*). You can also use kurz vor or kurz nach to mean 5 minutes till or 5 minutes after. There are endless ways to respond to a statement about time. A response to Es ist Viertel nach drei might look something like this: Es ist schon so spät? (*It's that late already?*).

Das Abendessen ist um 19 Uhr (*Dinner is at seven o'clock*)

The preposition um plus the time is used to tell when something is happening or going to happen. Here are some more examples to help demonstrate this: Das Spiel beginnt um 8:00 Uhr (*The game starts at 8:00*), Die Schule beginnt um viertel nach acht (*School starts at quarter after eight*), and Ich gehe um 5 Uhr zu meinem Freund nach Hause (*I'm going to my friend's house at 5:00*). There are many ways somebody could respond to a sentence like these. An example response to Das Abendessen ist um 19 Uhr is Ok, dann haben wir noch genug Zeit für einen Spaziergang (*Ok, then we still have enough time to go for a walk*).

Die Zeit vergeht wie im Flug! (*Time is flying by!*)

Have you ever looked at your watch and suddenly realized that time has gone by faster than you expected? Well, then you could make use of this German idiom! The idiom most likely has to do with the speed of birds in flight, but it is simply just another way to say: die Zeit vergeht sehr schnell. A response to this might look something like this: Ja, es geht viel zu schnell! (*Yeah, it's flying too quickly!*).

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the most essential German phrases for talking about time?

Wie spät ist es?	What time is it?
Weißt du wie spät es ist?	Do you know what time it is?
Wann möchtest du dich treffen?	When do you want to meet?
Um wie viel Uhr geht der Flug?	What time does the flight leave?
Wie lange wird dieser Flug dauern?	How long is this flight going to take?
Es ist gegen 15:45 Uhr.	It's around 3:45 pm.
Es ist Viertel nach drei.	It's quarter after three.

How do I ask how long something will take?

To find out how long something is going to take, use the sentence pattern *Wie lange wird + AKTIVITÄT + dauern?* (*How long is + ACTIVITY + going to take?*).

Wie lange wird dieser Flug dauern? (How long is this flight going to take?)

Wie lange wird das Treffen dauern? (How long is the meeting going to take?)

Wie lange wird das Spiel dauern? (How long is the game going to take?)

How do you distinguish between times that are before and after noon in German?

German-speaking countries use a 24 hour system instead of a 12 hour system like many English-speaking countries. Therefore, German speakers do not normally use words like am and pm when telling the time. Instead, they simply use the numbers 13-24 to specify the time when it occurs in the afternoon or evening. So for example, 10:30 am would stay the same, ie 10:30 Uhr, but 10:30 pm would be 22:30 Uhr.

What's the difference between viertel vor, viertel nach, drei viertel, kurz vor, and kurz nach?

You can use viertel vor whenever there are 15 minutes until the next hour. Therefore, 2:45 Uhr could be said to be viertel vor 3. Note that when you use viertel vor you use it with the coming hour! 2:45 Uhr does NOT mean the same thing as viertel vor 2; that would be 1:45 Uhr. drei viertel + the coming hour is simply another way to say viertel vor. viertel nach is just the opposite of this and can be used when it is 15 minutes after the hour. Thus, 3:15 Uhr could also be said to be viertel nach 3. kurz vor and kurz nach are similar to viertel vor and viertel nach. They are used whenever there's about 5 minutes until the coming hour (kurz vor) or when it's about 5 minutes after the hour (kurz nach). So, kurz vor 10 = 9:55 am, while kurz nach 10 = 10:05 am.

What does Punkt mean in the context of time?

Like in English how one can say on the dot whenever the hour is full, as in It's 12 on the dot, German uses Punkt: Es ist Punkt zwölf Uhr. (*It's 12 on the dot.*). Use Punkt whenever you want to emphasize exactly what time it is.

How do I say what time something is at?

The preposition um plus the time is used to tell when something is happening or going to happen. Here are some more examples to help demonstrate this: Das Spiel beginnt um 8:00 Uhr (*The game starts at 8:00*), Die Schule beginnt um viertel nach acht (*School starts at quarter after eight*), and Ich gehe um 5 Uhr zu meinem Freund nach Hause (*I'm going to my friend's house at 5:00*). There are many ways somebody could respond to a sentence like these. An example response to Das Abendessen ist um 19 Uhr is Ok, dann haben wir noch genug Zeit für einen Spaziergang (*Ok, then we still have enough time to go for a walk*).



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