

## Telling time in French

The foundation of telling time is knowing the French numbers from 1 to 24. Why not just 12? In French, time is usually based on the **24-hour clock**. Instead of 1 to 11 a.m., followed by 12 to 11p.m., the clock continues counting up from 12, so that 1 p.m. is 13, 2 p.m. is 14, all the way up to 24.

Midnight itself can be stated as **minuit**, **24h00**, or **0h00**, but one minute later, 24 disappears: 0h01, 0h02, etc.

While you definitely need to be able to understand the 24-hour clock, you don't necessarily need to talk about time with it. Instead, you can use the phrases **du matin** to mean a.m., and then **de l'après-midi** from noon until around 6 p.m., followed by **du soir** until midnight.

What time is it?	Quelle heure est-il ?	
It's one o'clock	Il est <u>une heure</u>	1h00
It's two o'clock	Il est <u>deux heures</u>	2h00
It's 3:15	Il est trois heures <u>et quart</u>	3h15
It's 4:30	Il est quatre heures <u>et demie</u>	4h30
It's 4:45	Il est cinq heures <u>moins le quart</u> Il est quatre heures quarante-cinq	4h45
It's 5:10	Il est cinq heures dix	5h10
It's 6:50	Il est sept heures moins dix Il est six heures cinquante	6h50
It's 7:20	Il est sept heures vingt	7h20
It's 8:40	Il est neuf heures moins vingt Il est huit heures quarante	8h40
It's 8 a.m.	Il est huit heures <u>du matin</u>	8h00
It's 5 p.m.	Il est cinq heures <u>de l'après-midi</u> Il est dix-sept heures	17h00
It's 8 p.m.	Il est huit heures <u>du soir</u> Il est vingt heures	20h00
It's noon	Il est <u>midi</u>	12h00
It's midnight	Il est <u>minuit</u>	0h00

Though many French people speak otherwise, the official grammar rule is that the fractions *et quart*, *et demie* and *moins le quart* are informal and can only be used with 1 to 12. Once you're into the 24-hour clock, you must use *quinze*, *trente*, and *quarante-cinq*.

**Par exemple...**

1:15	<i>une heure quinze</i> <i>une heure et quart</i>	<i>treize heures quinze</i> <del><i>treize heures et quart</i></del>
3:30	<i>trois heures trente</i> <i>trois heures et demie</i>	<i>quinze heures trente</i> <del><i>quinze heures et demie</i></del>
4:45	<i>quatre heures quarante-cinq</i> <i>cinq heures moins le quart</i>	<i>seize heures quarante-cinq</i> <del><i>dix-sept heures moins le quart</i></del>

*Il est* is the only correct phrase for telling time. You cannot say ~~*e'est une heure*~~. Also, it doesn't matter that *heure* is a feminine noun: *il est* is impersonal, so you can't say ~~*elle est une heure*~~.