

# I. HOURS AND MINUTES

## A. Asking the time

The two common ways of asking the time of day are:

Wie spät ist es?                      and                      Wie viel Uhr ist es?  
(What time is it?)

NOTE: In the expression **wie viel Uhr**, **wie viel** does not take an adjective ending.

## B. UM = at

Where English uses the preposition *at* (e.g., *at eight o'clock*), German uses the preposition **um** (**um acht Uhr**):

Er kommt **um** acht Uhr.  
(He's coming *at* eight o'clock.)

**Um** is used to indicate *exact* time. To indicate approximate time, **gegen** is used:

Er kommt **gegen** acht Uhr.  
(He's coming *along toward* [about] eight o'clock.)

## C. Full, half, and quarter hours and minutes

### 1. Full hours

Es ist acht (Uhr).                      (It's eight [o'clock].)

NOTE 1: **Um** is not used in telling a person the time of day, i.e., in answering the question **Wie spät ist es?** This corresponds to English usage: English does not use the preposition *at* in such cases.

NOTE 2: The word **Uhr** may be omitted, just as the word *o'clock* may be. When it is omitted from the German equivalent of *one o'clock*, however, the word **eins** must be used:

Es ist **ein** Uhr.                      but                      Es ist **eins**.

### 2. Half hours

In English the *half* hour always refers back to the *last* full hour: it's half *past seven*. In German, however, it refers to the next full hour: it's half (of the way to) eight.

7.30                      Es ist **halb acht**.  
(It's *half past seven*.)

### 3. Quarter hours

The most common way of telling time is to use the prepositions **nach** (*after* the hour) and **vor** (*before* the hour):

8.15                      Es ist **Viertel nach acht**.  
(It's *quarter after eight*.)

7.45                      Es ist **Viertel vor acht**.  
(It's *quarter to eight*.)

In German, and in particular Southern German speech, there is an alternate way of reporting quarter hours that is essentially the same as the way half hours are told. This construction does not use prepositions. All the quarter hours refer to the *next* full hour, rather than to the *last* one:

7.15                      Es ist **viertel acht**. (*a quarter of the way to eight*)  
(7.30                      Es ist **halb acht**. [*half of the way to eight*])  
7.45                      Es ist **drei viertel acht**. (*three quarters of the way to eight*)

NOTE: When this way of reporting time is used the word "**viertel**" is not capitalized.

### 4. Minutes

Expressions referring to minutes require the preposition **nach** or **vor**:

3.10                      Es ist zehn (Minuten) **nach** drei.  
3.25                      Es ist fünfundzwanzig (Minuten) **nach** drei.  
3.35                      Es ist fünfundzwanzig (Minuten) **vor** vier.

NOTE 1: **Nach** and **vor** are used like their English equivalents *after* (*past*) and *before* (*to*): **nach** is used up to the half hour and refers to the last full hour (3:29 = neunundzwanzig nach drei) and **vor** is used after the half hour and refers to the *next* full hour (3:31 = neunundzwanzig vor vier).

NOTE 2: Like the word *minutes*, the word **Minuten** is often omitted.

NOTE 3: Occasionally, the half hour may be used as a reference rather than the full hour. This is the case especially when the approximate time is already known:

Es ist fünf nach (vor) halb.  
(It's five minutes after [before] the half hour.)

### 5. Timetable time

Railroads, bus stations, airports, theaters, etc. use a 24-hour system:

Der Zug kommt um **20.15** (zwanzig Uhr fünfzehn) in Mainz an.  
(The train arrives in Mainz at 8:15 p.m.)

NOTE: In such cases, quarters and halves are not used. They are replaced by the numbers 15, 30, and 45:

20.15	zwanzig Uhr fünfzehn
15.30	fünfzehn Uhr dreißig
8.45	acht Uhr fünfundvierzig

Note that a period, not a colon, is used between the hours and the minutes.

## II. DAYS AND PARTS OF DAYS

The parts of the day are all *masculine* with the exception of **die Nacht** and **die Mitternacht**.

<b>der Morgen</b>	morning	<b>die Nacht</b>	night
<b>der Vormittag</b>	forenoon	<b>die Mitternacht</b>	midnight
<b>der Mittag</b>	noon		
<b>der Nachmittag</b>	afternoon		
<b>der Abend</b>	evening		

All expressions referring to whole days are *masculine*. These include:

1. the word *day*: **der Tag**

2. the days of the week:

<b>der Sonntag</b>	<b>der Donnerstag</b>
<b>der Montag</b>	<b>der Freitag</b>
<b>der Dienstag</b>	<b>der Samstag (Sonnabend)</b>
<b>der Mittwoch</b>	

3. dates: **der zehnte Mai**

### A. AM

All time expressions referring to days and parts of days may be used with **am**—with the exception of **Nacht** and **Mitternacht**.

These expressions may indicate:

1. *a one-time occurrence*

Er kommt **am** Donnerstag (**am** dreiundzwanzigsten Mai, **am** Abend).  
(He's coming *on* Thursday [*on* the twenty-third of May, *in* the evening].)

2. *a regularly repeated occurrence*

Die Rechnungen kommen immer **am** Montag (**am** ersten Januar, **am** Morgen).  
(The bills always come *on* Monday [*on* the first of January, *in* the morning].)

NOTE: The word is **am** (not **an**) and is a contraction of **an dem**.

EXCEPTIONS: **in** der Nacht  
**um** Mitternacht

As in English, the preposition may be omitted *before days of the week*:

Er kommt Mittwoch. (He's coming Wednesday.)

### B. Adverbs of time

The days of the week and the parts of the day can be used as adverbs. The adverb is formed by adding an **-s** ending to the noun. As is always the case in German, adverbs are *not capitalized*.

In contrast to the **am**-expressions (**am** Montag, etc.), these adverbs are only used to indicate *repeated occurrences*:

Er arbeitet nachmittags (nachts, samstags).  
(He works afternoons [nights, Saturdays].)

EXCEPTION: During the day = **tags** or **tagsüber**.

NOTE: There is no adverbial form of dates. The formula is:

Er arbeitet immer **am ersten** Januar.  
(He always works *on the first* of January.)