

# Lesson 44

## Telling Time in Italian

Here's some rules and guidelines for telling time in Italian:

1. To ask what time it is, you can say:

*Che ora è?*

*Che ore sono?*

Both expressions have the same meaning = *What time is it?*

**They are interchangeable.** The only difference between the two is that one is in the third person singular, and the other is in the third person plural. Either question will get you the time in Italian.

2. To tell time in Italian, use the third person singular or plural of **essere**. The definite article is used before the hour.

**È** is only for:

- È mezzogiorno.

*It's noon.*

- È mezzanotte.

*It's midnight.*

- When it is one o'clock or a variant of one o'clock (such as 1:15pm, 1:30pm, 1:55pm)

*È l'una*

*It's one o'clock.*

*È l'una e dieci.*

*It's 1:10.*

3. **Sono** is used in all other instances of telling time:

**Sono** le cinque.

*It's five o'clock.*

**Sono** le due.

*It's two o'clock.*

4. The [definite article](#) is used before the the hour in question, *except* when it is **mezzogiorno** or **mezzanotte**:

Sono **le** sette.

*It's seven o'clock.*

Sono **le** undici.

*It's eleven o'clock.*

È mezzogiorno.  
*It's noon.*

È mezzanotte.  
*It's midnight.*

5. To express the time of day, [the following expressions](#) may prove helpful:

**di mattina = AM** (til 12pm)

**del pomeriggio = PM** (from 12PM to 5PM)

**di sera = PM** (from 5pm to midnight)

**di notte =** from midnight to the early morning hour

Sono le due **di notte**.  
*It's 2 o'clock in the morning. (2:00 AM)*

Sono le nove **di mattina**.  
*It's 9 o'clock in the morning. (9:00 AM)*

È l'una **del pomeriggio**.  
*It's 1 o'clock in the afternoon. (1:00 PM)*

6. To say, **(At) what time...** in Italian, use the following:

*A che ora...?*

**A che ora** vai al cinema?  
*At what time are you going to the cinema?*

**A che ora** finisce il dramma?  
*At what times does the play finish?*

7. To say that you are doing some *at* a particular time, use the preposition **alle + time** (with the exception of *l'una*, *mezzogiorno* and *mezzanotte*):

Vado a scuola **alle nove di mattina**.  
*I go to school at 9 o'clock in the morning.*

Il lavoro finisce **alle cinque del pomeriggio**.  
*Work ends at 5 o'clock PM.*

La mia pausa comincia **all'una del pomeriggio**.  
*My break starts at 1 o'clock PM.*

Vado a letto **a mezzanotte**.  
*I go to bed at midnight.*

I turni di lavoro cambiano **a mezzogiorno**.  
*The shifts change at noon.*

8. Telling time when it includes parts of the hour can be tricky. To tell the time when **it is 30 minutes or less past the hour**, use the following construction:

Sono le cinque e mezzo.  
*It is 5:30.\**

Sono le cinque e quarto.  
*It is 5:15.\*\**

Sono le cinque e nove.  
*It's 5:09.*

Sono le cinque e ventidue.  
*It's 5:22.*

9. To tell the time when **it is 30 minutes or more past the hour**, the method is to **subtract** from the next hour:

**the next hour + meno + minutes left until the next hour**

To say that it is 11:50 AM, you would say that it is:

*È mezzogiorno meno dieci.*

Literally, *it is 12:00 minus 10 minutes*. In English, we would say: *It is ten minutes until noon*.

Here are some more examples:

8:42 AM = Sono le nove meno diciotto.  
3:52 PM = Sono le quattro meno otto.  
7:32 PM = Sono le otto meno ventotto.  
4:45 PM = Sono le cinque meno quarto.\*\*

\* Often, **mezzo** replaces **trenta** to say '30' when telling time, although it is acceptable to say: Sono le cinque e trenta.

\*\* Often, **quarto** replaces **quindici** to say '15' when telling time, although it is acceptable to say: Sono le cinque e quindici.



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