

LESSON NOTES

Absolute Beginner S1 #5 Why Are You Always Twenty Minutes Behind the Spanish Time?

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INFORMAL SPANISH

1. EVA: ¿Qué hora es?
2. MARCO: ¿Mande?
3. EVA: ¿Qué hora tienes?
4. MARCO: Son veinte para las tres.

ENGLISH

1. EVA: What time is it?
2. MARCO: Excuse me?
3. EVA: What time do you have?
4. MARCO: It's twenty to three o'clock.

VOCABULARY

Spanish	English	Class
¿Qué hora es?	What time is it?	phrase
¿Mande?	Excuse me? What did you say?	phrase
¿Qué hora tienes?	What time do you have?	phrase
veinte	twenty	numeral
las tres	three o'clock	phrase

SAMPLE SENTENCES

<p>¿Qué hora es en la Ciudad de México?</p> <p>"What time is it in Mexico City?"</p>	<p>¿Mande? ¿Qué me acabas de decir?</p> <p>"Excuse me? What did you just say to me?"</p>
<p>¿Qué hora tienes? Es que mi reloj está atrasado.</p> <p>"What time do you have? My watch is slow."</p>	<p>Llegué al paradero con las justas. Veinte segundos después pasó el micro.</p> <p>"I arrived at the bus stop by the skin of my teeth. Twenty seconds later, the bus came."</p>

Toman su café a las tres de la tarde cada día.

"They drink their coffee at three o'clock in the afternoon every day."

VOCABULARY PHRASE USAGE

¿Qué hora es? ("What time is it?")

This is the standard way to ask for the current time in Spanish.

¿Mande? ("Excuse me, what did you say?")

This is a very common way to ask politely for repetition in Mexican Spanish. In other regions, it is more common to say *¿cómo?* ("What did you say?")

¿Qué hora tienes? ("What time do you have?")

This is an alternate way to ask for the current time in Spanish. The standard way is *¿Qué hora es?*

veinte ("twenty")

We write the numbers between twenty-one and thirty as single words with the stem *veinti-* (e.g., *veintiuno* ("twenty-one"), *veintidós* ("twenty-two"), *veintitrés* ("twenty-three"), etc.)

las tres ("three o'clock")

We express hours in Spanish as feminine definite articles (*la* or *las*) plus the number. For example, *las tres* ("three o'clock"), *las dos* ("two o'clock"), *la una* ("one o'clock").

GRAMMAR

The Focus of This Lesson Is Telling the Current Time.

¿Qué hora es?

"What time is it?"

In Spanish, to ask the question "What time is it?" we ask *¿qué hora es?* ("What hour is it?"). We always use the verb *ser* with expressions of time (we never use *estar*). With expressions of time, you will only ever find people using the verb *ser* in either the third person singular *es* or the third person plural *son* forms. Only while dealing with "one o'clock" do we use *ser* in the singular *es* form, while from two o'clock to twelve, it is always the plural *son* form. The expression of minutes comes after that of the hour, so we say *son las dos con quince minutos*, which literally translates into "it's two with fifteen minutes," and we would probably render this as "it's one-fifteen."

The Question:

¿Qué hora es?

"What time is it?" (literally, "What hour is it?")

[Interrogative Adverb] + [Feminine Singular Noun] + [Verb, Third Person Singular]

¿[Qué] + [hora] + [es]?

¿Qué hora es?

"What time is it?"

Answer 1

Es la una.

"It's one o'clock." (literally, "It is the one.")

[Verb, Third Person Singular] + [Feminine Singular Definite Article] + [Feminine Number]

[Es] + [la] + [una].

Es la una.

"It's one o'clock."

Answer 2

Son las dos.

"It's two o'clock." (literally, "They are the two.")

[Verb, Third Person Plural] + [Feminine Plural Definite Article] + [Feminine Number]

Sample Sentences

1. *Voy al colegio a las siete.*
"I go to school at seven o'clock."
2. *Trabajáis a las ocho.*
"You all work at eight o'clock."
3. *Son las dos de la tarde.*
"It's two o'clock in the afternoon."
4. *Es la una de la mañana.*
"It's one o'clock in the morning."
5. *Son las cuatro de la tarde con quince minutos.*
"It's four-fifteen in the afternoon."
6. *Es la una con veinte minutos.*
"It's one-twenty."
7. *Son las once de la noche con cuarenta minutos.*
"It's eleven-forty at night."

CULTURAL INSIGHT

Spanish Equivalents of Till and Minus

Here are some tips on addressing time in Spanish-speaking countries using "till" or "minus." For example, if it's three-fifty p.m. and you're asked to provide the time, you could say *Son diez para las cuatro* or *Cuatro menos diez*. What can I say, we're a versatile people!

By the way, a great way to use time, at least in Mexico, is to "drink" to it. I know what you're thinking: it's barely three o'clock p.m.!!! To which I respond, it's five o'clock somewhere! All joking aside, if you happen to be at a restaurant and someone just happens to ask you what time it is, you should respond *¡Es hora de decir salud!* ("It's time to say cheers!") It gets them every time.

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