

## Expressing age in Czech

*How do you say how old you are (or were or will be)?*

*What grammatical means and particularities are necessary for doing this?*

*Kolik je ti/vám let? Kolik ti/vám je?*

*How old are you?*

*Kolik je mu/jí let? Kolik mu/jí je?*

*How old is he/she?*

*Kolik je jim let? Kolik jim je?*

*How old are they?*

*Je mi 20 let.*

*I'm 20.*

*Jsou mu tři roky.*

*He's three.*

*Je jim 18 let.*

*They're 18.*

*Je mi 43 let.*

*I'm 43.*

*Je jí jeden rok.*

*She's a year old.*

*Jsou jim čtyři roky.*

*They're four.*

From our perspective, **Czechs talk about age indirectly**. Instead of asking "How old are you?", they ask "**How many (years) are there to you?**".\*

The "to you" part is expressed **in the dative case**. That is, the person whose age is in question is expressed either through an appropriate **dative pronoun** (*mi, ti, mu, jí, vám, nám, jim*) or a **dative form of the person's name** (*Davidovi, Katce, panu profesorovi, paní Navrátilové...*). In the answer, the dative construction is preserved: "There is to me 20 years."

The word for "year(s)" has different forms that depend on the number. One year is **(jeden) rok**. Two, three or four years is **dva/tři/čtyři roky**. For numbers five and higher, which require a genitive plural, the word **let** is used (*roků* can also be heard). These numbers also determine the verbal agreement: **jeden rok requires a (masculine) singular verb, dva/tři/čtyři roky require a plural verb, and higher ages with let take a neuter singular default verb**. Present-tense examples are above.

In the future, the verbs **bude (singular)** and **budou (plural)** are used. In the past, the verbs **byl (masculine singular)**, **byly (plural)**, and **bylo (neuter singular)** are used.

*Kolik ti bude let v roce 2020?*

*Kolik bylo tatínkovi a mamince let, když ses narodila?*

*Kolik let bylo Obamovi, když se stal prezidentem?*

*Když mi byly čtyři roky, ještě jsme bydleli v Houstonu.*

*Dokončila univerzitu, když jí bylo 25 let.*

*Když mu byl jeden rok, rodina se přestěhovala do Ameriky.*

*Příští rok v lednu jí budou tři roky.*

\* In spoken Czech, it is possible to ask about age in the English way: *Jak jsi starý/stará?*