

# Telling time

*How do you tell time in Czech?*

The expressions below are used to **ask about time**.

Kolik je hodin?	What time is it? (literally, How many hours is it?)
V kolik (hodin) je...?	At what time is...?
Kdy...?	When...?

**Responses to the first question that are on the hour use singular verbs for all times except for two o'clock, three o'clock, and four o'clock, which take plural verbs.**

Je (byla, bude) jedna hodina.	It is (was, will be) one o'clock.
Je (bylo, bude) pět hodin.	It is (was, will be) five o'clock.
Je (bylo, bude) dvacet hodin.	It is (was, will be) eight pm.
Jsou (byly, budou) dvě hodiny.	It is (was, will be) two o'clock.

Note that **Czechs mostly use the 24-hour clock**. Times periods of the day — which differ somewhat from American conventions — can be specified with the addition of an adverb: ***ráno*** (in the morning: roughly 5am to 9am); ***dopoledne*** (in the morning: around 9am - noon); ***odpoledne*** (in the afternoon: noon to about 6pm); ***večer*** (in the evening: 6pm to midnight); ***v noci*** (at night: approximately midnight to 5am).

Jsou čtyři hodiny odpoledne.	It's four in the afternoon.
Bylo devět hodin večer.	It was nine in the evening.
Bude jedenáct dopoledne.	It will be eleven in the morning.
Jsou dvě hodiny v noci.	It's two am.

**“Noon” is *poledne***: *Je (bylo, bude) poledne*. **“Midnight” is *půlnoc***: *Je (byla, bude) půlnoc*.

**To answer the question *Kdy?* Or *V kolik?*, use the preposition *v* plus the accusative case of the time, which will almost always be the regular form of the time except for “at one o'clock” (*v jednu hodinu*). The preposition becomes *ve* before *dvě, tři, čtyři, dvanáct, dvacet...***

Film začíná ve čtyři odpoledne.  
Musím být v práci v osm.  
Dáme si sraz v kavárně ve dvacet hodin.  
Přišla jsem domů ve tři v noci.  
Mám odlet ve dvacet.

**To say “at noon”, use *v poledne*, but to say “at midnight”, use *o půlnoci*.**

## Time off the hour

From the perspective of an English speaker, **the Czech system for telling time off the hour is complicated**. You can **always just say the numbers using the 24-hour clock**, which is standard for official time-telling (eg, in train stations, at airports...). This is the easier way and corresponds to English.

Je patnáct dvacet.	It's 3:20 pm.
Odlet je v osmnáct patnáct.	The flight's departure is at 6:15 pm.
Vlak odjíždí ve třináct deset.	The train departs at 1:10 pm.

The more colloquial system of time-telling off the hour depends on the exact time.

**To say “quarter past”, use *čtvrt na* plus the accusative case of the cardinal number of the next hour (literally, “a quarter on two”).**

Je čtvrt na dvě.	It's 1:15.
Je čtvrt na sedmnáct.	It's 4:15 in the afternoon.
Je čtvrt na deset.	It's 9:15.

**To say “three quarters past”, use *tři čtvrtě na* plus the accusative case of the cardinal number of the next hour (literally, “three quarters on five”).**

Bylo tři čtvrtě na pět.	It was 4:45.
Je tři čtvrtě na dvacet.	It's 7:45 pm.
Je tři čtvrtě na devět.	It's 8:45.

**To say “half past”, use *půl* plus the genitive singular of the ordinal number of the next hour (literally, “half of the third hour”).**

Je půl třetí.	It's 2:30.
Bylo půl páté.	It was 4:30.
Je půl jedné.	It's 12:30.
Je půl čtrnácté.	It's 1:30 pm.

**Specifying other times off the hour requires reference to an upcoming time interval: the next hour, the next quarter or half hour, or the next three-quarters of an hour. Use the preposition *za* plus the accusative case of the time remaining until that point (literally, “in five minutes, it is six o'clock”).**

Je za pět minut osmnáct.	It's 5:55 pm.
Je za deset tři čtvrtě na šest.	It's 5:35.
Je za pět minut půl osmé.	It's 7:25.
Je za deset čtvrt na dvě.	It's 1:05.