

Module 9: Amusons-nous!
Topic 1 Content: Dire L'heure Notes

Introduction



Dire L'heure

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Closest Hour



Telling time in French is not a difficult task, as long as you know your numbers in French. The key to conversational time is that you always go to the closest hour. For example, at 10:25 the closest hour is 10, so you say *il est dix heures vingt-cinq*. At 10:35, the closest hour is 11. In this example, you say *il est onze heures moins vingt-cinq*. This is the same as saying 11 minus 25. Notice how *moins*, meaning *minus*, was used in this example.

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Telling Time



The image shows three analog clocks on a teal background. Each clock is accompanied by a French label and an English translation in parentheses. The first clock shows 10:15, labeled "dix heures et quart" with the translation "(a quarter hour)". The second clock shows 10:30, labeled "dix heures et demie" with the translation "(a half hour)". The third clock shows 10:45, labeled "onze heures moins le quart" with the translation "(minus a quarter hour)".

If you split the clock in half, the right half uses the numbers 1 through 6 for the hours, and the numbers 0 through 29 for minutes. The left half uses the numbers 7 through 11 for hours, and 1 through 29 for minutes. However, in conversational time, you do not say 15, 30, or minus 15 minutes. Instead you say quarter after, half past, or quarter of (minus a quarter). For example, 10:15 is *dix heures et quart*. 10:30 is *dix heures et demie*. And 10:45 (quarter to 11) is *onze heures moins le quart*. *Et quart* means and a quarter (hour), *et demie* means and a half (hour), and *moins le quart* means minus a quarter (hour).

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AM or PM



Sometimes you will not need to specify if it is am or pm, but sometimes you will. If someone asks you to go to the movies at 6, you can safely assume they mean 6 pm without saying it. If you do want to clarify you have three choices in French. You can say *du matin* for am. For example, *six heures du matin* is *six in the morning*. For pm, you will need to choose between *de l'après-midi* or *du soir*. *Trois heures de l'après-midi* means it is *3 in the afternoon*. *Sept heures du soir* means it is *7 in the evening*.

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Right Half



The right half of the clock uses the numbers 0 through 29, with the exception of the minute 15. Instead of saying 15, the French use *et quart* (and a quarter). Instead of using the minute 30, the French say *et demie* (and a half). To tell the correct time, the minutes on the right half of the clock are added to the hour that you see. Look at the example. *Quelle heure est-il?* What time is it? If you were asked this question in English, you would respond, *it is 2:15 am*. In French, use the formula: *Il est (hour) heure(s) (minutes)*. Therefore, your response in French is: *Il est deux heures et quart*.

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Left Half



The left half of the clock uses the numbers 1 through 29. To tell the correct time, the minutes on the left half of the clock are subtracted from 60. Look at the example. *Quelle heure est-il?* What time is it? If you were asked this question in English, you would respond, *it is 7:55 am*. In French, use the formula: *Il est* (closest hour) *heure(s) moins* (subtract minutes from 60). Therefore, your response in French is: *Il est huit heures moins cinq*.

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Midnight



Instead of saying 12 o'clock, you will hear *midi* (noon) or *minuit* (midnight) if it is conversational time. When using these words, *heures* is not used. Look at the example show. *Quelle heure est-il?* What time is it? In this example, it is 12:15 am. *Il est minuit et quart.*

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At



So far, all of the examples used *Il est*, meaning *It is*. You can also put *à* in front of the time to say *at 4h10*. You would say that as *à quatre heures dix*.

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Half Past, Quarter Past, and Quarter Of

Half Past	Quarter Past	Quarter Of
et demie	et quart	moins le quart
		
Il est sept heures et demie.	Il est quatre heures et quart.	Il est dix heures moins le quart.

Here are a couple more examples using half past, quarter past, and quarter of. Half past is pronounced *et demie*, quarter past is pronounced *et quart*, and quarter of is pronounced *moins le quart*. Look at the three examples shown. *Quelle heure est-il?* What time is it? *Il est sept heures et demie. Il est quatre heures et quart. Il est dix heures moins le quart*

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Replace Colon



When telling time in English, you use a colon to separate the hours and minutes. In the example shown, the time is written 9:30 am. In French, the colon is replaced with an *h*. The *h* separates the hours and minutes.