Telling time in Italian: beyond the basics focuses on practical ways to say the time naturally, using real phrases that Italians use every day. This guide explains the grammar behind common expressions, gives clear examples, and offers quick tips to sound confident when telling or asking the time in Italian.

Core rules to remember

Use è l’una for 1 o’clock and sono le for all other hours.

- **È l’una** — It is one o’clock.
- **Sono le due, tre, quattro…** — It is two, three, four o’clock.
- Use **e** to add minutes after the hour: sono le quattro **e** dieci (4:10).
- Use **meno** to say “to” the next hour: sono le cinque **meno dieci** (4:50).
- **Un quarto** and **mezzo/mezzo** are used for quarter and half: sono le sei **e un quarto** (6:15), sono le otto **e mezza** (8:30).

Common expressions with examples

- **Sono le quattro** — 4:00
- **Sono le quattro e un quarto** — 4:15
- **Sono le quattro e mezza** — 4:30
- **Sono le cinque meno venti** — 4:40
- **Sono le sette meno un quarto** — 6:45
- **Sono le sei e cinque** — 6:05

How to sound natural

- Add time-of-day when needed: **di mattina**, **del pomeriggio**, **di sera**.
- For schedules, Italians often prefer the 24-hour format: 14:00 for 2pm is common in timetables.
- Use contractions in casual speech: **mezzogiorno** (noon), **mezzanotte** (midnight).

Practice drill

Repeat these aloud or write translations to build fluency. Remember: the next time you tell the hour, think whether you need **e** or **meno**, and whether to use **l’una** or **le**.

> Sono le quattro, sono le quattro e un quarto, sono le quattro e mezza, sono le cinque meno venti, sono le sei e un quarto, sono le sette meno dieci.

Telling time in Italian: beyond the basics becomes effortless with a few minutes of daily practice. Learn the patterns, use the common phrases, and soon telling time will feel completely natural.

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