

Telling time on the hour in Spanish is one of the first and most useful things to learn. The structure is simple and highly patterned. Once you know the basic rules, you can say every hour of the day with confidence.

Core rule

When the time is exactly on the hour, Spanish uses either **es la** or **son las** followed by the hour. Use **es la** only for one o'clock. For all other hours use **son las**.

- **Es la una.** — It is one o'clock.
- **Son las dos.** — It is two o'clock.

Common phrases for “on the hour”

If you want to emphasise “exactly” on the hour, add **en punto** at the end: **Son las tres en punto.** This is like saying “three o'clock sharp.”

Special words for noon and midnight

- **El mediodía** or **las doce del día** — noon / 12:00 PM (you can say **Es mediodía**).
- **La medianoche** or **las doce de la noche** — midnight / 12:00 AM (you can say **Es medianoche**).

Examples: every hour on the hour

Practice the pattern by saying the question and the answer. Here are common forms for each hour, both with and without the question.

1.

¿Qué hora es? — Es la una. (It is one o'clock.)

2.

¿Qué hora es? — Son las dos. (It is two o'clock.)

3.

¿Qué hora es? — Son las tres. (It is three o'clock.)

4.

¿Qué hora es? — Son las cuatro. (It is four o'clock.)

5.

¿Qué hora es? — Son las cinco. (It is five o'clock.)

6.

¿Qué hora es? — Son las seis. (It is six o'clock.)

7.

¿Qué hora es? — Son las siete. (It is seven o'clock.)

8.

¿Qué hora es? — Son las ocho. (It is eight o'clock.)

9.

¿Qué hora es? — Son las nueve. (It is nine o'clock.)

10.

¿Qué hora es? — Son las diez. (It is ten o'clock.)

11.

¿Qué hora es? — Son las once. (It is eleven o'clock.)

12.

¿Qué hora es? — Son las doce. (It is twelve o'clock.)

Adding morning, afternoon and night

To be more specific, add a phrase for the time of day:

- **de la mañana** — in the morning (roughly midnight to noon)
- **de la tarde** — in the afternoon (roughly noon to evening)
- **de la noche** — at night

Examples:

- **Son las ocho de la mañana.** — It is eight in the morning.
- **Son las tres de la tarde.** — It is three in the afternoon.
- **Son las diez de la noche.** — It is ten at night.

Practice suggestions

Use these short drills to move from recognition to production.

1. Say the question aloud: **¿Qué hora es?**
2. Answer using the correct form: **Es la una** or **Son las X**.
3. Add **en punto** when you want to emphasise exactness.
4. Include **de la mañana/tarde/noche** to practice distinguishing parts of the day.

Common mistakes to avoid

- Using **es la** with any hour other than one. Only say **es la una**.
- For 12 o'clock use **es mediodía** or **es medianoche** when appropriate instead of only **son las doce**.
- Remember to add the period of the day if context is unclear.

Quick reference

Memorise this simple template:

Question: ¿Qué hora es?

Answer: Es la una / Son las + number [+ en punto] [+ de la mañana/tarde/noche]

With these patterns you can express any exact hour in Spanish. Practise aloud, notice the singular for one o'clock, and add time-of-day phrases when needed. Soon saying the time will feel automatic.

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