Arabic A1, lesson 16: telling the time

A1 Lesson 16 of 18

You ask for and give the time, with “half past”, “quarter past” and “quarter to”.

Vocabulary | Dialogue | Grammar | Exercises

Pronunciation is written in Latin letters (ā, ī, ū = long vowels; ḥ, ṣ, ḍ, ṭ, ẓ = emphatic consonants; ʿ = the letter ع). The Arabic is always fully vowelled.

ARABIC	PRONUNCIATION	MEANING
السَّاعَةُ	*as-sāʿa*	the hour, the clock
الْوَاحِدَةُ	*al-wāḥida*	one o'clock
الثَّانِيَةُ	*ath-thāniya*	two o'clock
الثَّالِثَةُ	*ath-thālitha*	three o'clock
الرَّابِعَةُ	*ar-rābiʿa*	four o'clock
الْخَامِسَةُ	*al-khāmisa*	five o'clock

ARABIC	PRONUNCIATION	MEANING
السَّادِسَةُ	*as-sādisa*	six o'clock
السَّابِعَةُ	*as-sābiʿa*	seven o'clock
الثَّامِنَةُ	*ath-thāmina*	eight o'clock
وَنِصْفٌ	*wa niṣf*	and a half
وَرُبْعٌ	*wa rubʿ*	and a quarter
إِلَّا رُبْعًا	*illā rubʿan*	quarter to
دَقِيقَةٌ	*daqīqa*	a minute
صَبَاحًا	*ṣabāḥan*	in the morning
مَسَاءً	*masāʾan*	in the evening
الْآنَ	*al-āna*	now

KARIM

كَمِ السَّاعَةُ الْآنَ؟

kami s-sāʿatu l-āna?

What time is it now?

SALMA

السَّاعَةُ الثَّالِثَةُ وَنِصْفٌ.

as-sāʿatu th-thālithatu wa niṣf.

It is half past three.

KARIM

وَمَتَى الدَّرْسُ؟

wa matā d-dars?

And when is the lesson?

SALMA

الدَّرْسُ فِي السَّاعَةِ الْخَامِسَةِ مَسَاءً.

ad-darsu fī s-sāʿati l-khāmisati masāʾan.

The lesson is at five in the evening.

KARIM

شُكْرًا.

shukran.

Thank you.

Telling the time with feminine numbers

To give the time say السَّاعَةُ (the hour, a feminine word) followed by a **feminine ordinal number**: السَّاعَةُ الْوَاحِدَةُ (one o'clock), السَّاعَةُ الثَّانِيَةُ (two o'clock)… The number agrees with السَّاعَةُ, which is why it ends in ـَةٌ.

For minutes: وَنِصْفٌ (and a half), وَرُبْعٌ (and a quarter), إِلَّا رُبْعًا (quarter to). To say "at five o'clock": فِي السَّاعَةِ الْخَامِسَةِ. Add صَبَاحًا or مَسَاءً to be precise.

Examples

ARABIC	PRONUNCIATION	MEANING
السَّاعَةُ الْوَاحِدَةُ	*as-sāʿatu l-wāḥida*	it is one o'clock
السَّاعَةُ الثَّامِنَةُ وَنِصْفٌ	*as-sāʿatu th-thāminatu wa niṣf*	it is half past eight
السَّاعَةُ السَّابِعَةُ إِلَّا رُبْعًا	*as-sāʿatu s-sābiʿatu illā rubʿan*	it is quarter to seven
الدَّرْسُ فِي السَّاعَةِ الْخَامِسَةِ	*ad-darsu fī s-sāʿati l-khāmisa*	the lesson is at five o'clock

Ibrahim explains



Careful: “quarter to seven” uses السَّابِعَةُ, the seventh hour, minus a quarter.

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