

There is a lot of confusion regarding the writing and speaking of **Dates**, **Years**, and **Time** in English. We give below the correct method of writing and telling them.

Dates—Dates can be written in the following **four** ways :

- (1) 25 October,
 - (2) October 25,
 - (3) October 25th,
 - (4) 25. 10. 93 .
- (a) All these four methods are correct, but preference should be given to the **First** method.
 - (b) For dates **below ten** (*i.e.*, 1 to 9) the **second** method should be avoided as far as possible.
 - (c) The **third method** is good for all dates, but it should be given second preference after the First method.
 - (d) There can be much confusion in the use of the **Fourth** method, therefore it should not be used very frequently. There is a great difference in the **English system** and the **American system** in the use of the Fourth method. In the English system the three numerical figures serially stand for **day-month-year**, and in the American system for **month-day-year**. This difference in the English and American systems can lead to serious error in the interpretation of the date, month, and year. For example, 8. 10. 1995 in the English system would mean 8 October, 1995, but in the American system it would mean 10 August, 1995. Thus the same date would have two connotations. This kind of confusion should be avoided by avoiding the fourth method of writing the dates.

Let us now consider how to speak out these dates—

Written Spoken

25 October	the twenty-fifth of October
October 25	October twenty-five or twenty-fifth
October 25th	October the twenty-fifth
25. 10. 93	Twenty-five, ten, ninety-three.

Years—There is no difference in the method of writing the **years**, but there is a difference in speaking them out. In this connection the following points should be kept in mind—

- (1) The whole centuries upto 1900 should be read/spoken as follows :

1600	=	Sixteen hundred (not one thousand six hundred)
1700	=	Seventeen hundred (not one thousand seven hundred)

 Similarly, Eighteen hundred, Nineteen hundred, etc.
- (2) But years 2000 or above should be spoken in thousands. **As—**

2000	=	Two thousand (not twenty hundred)
2500	=	Two thousand five hundred (not twenty-five hundred)
- (3) If figures from **1 to 9** are to be added after **hundreds**, the word **hundred** must be **read / spoken. As—**

1705	=	Seventeen hundred and five (not seventeen five)
1809	=	Eighteen hundred and nine (not eighteen nine)
1903	=	Nineteen hundred and three (not nineteen three)
- (4) If figures from 10 and above are to be added after **hundreds**, the word **hundred** is **not read / spoken**

1735 = Seventeen thirty-five (not seventeen hundred thirty-five)

1853 = Eighteen fifty-three (not eighteen hundred fifty-three)

1914 = Nineteen fourteen (not nineteen hundred and fourteen)

Time—Time is written/spoken in **two** ways :

(1) **By figures, as—**

8.35; 9.25; 11.40

This method is popularly used in **Time-tables** and **official notices**. In this method, the numerical figure before the Full-stop denotes **Hours**, and the figure after the Full-stop denotes **Minutes**. They are read/spoken as—Eight thirty-five ; Nine twenty-five ; Eleven forty, etc.

(2) **In conversational form :**

(1) In conversational form words **past** and **to** are popularly used. '**Past**' means 'so many minutes **after** a certain hour', and '**to**' means 'so many minutes **before** the **next** hour'. In both these expressions **minutes** are placed before **Past** or **to**, and **hour** after them. Further, in this method the minutes **up to thirty** are expressed in relation to the **preceding** hour (as so many minutes **past** that hour), and minutes **thirty onwards** are expressed in relation to the **next** hour (as so many minutes **to** that hour, *i.e.* short of the next hour). Thus 'Twelve past one' means 'twelve minutes over one O'clock'. In the same way, 'fourteen minutes past eleven' means 'fourteen minutes over eleven O'clock'. Against it, 'seven minutes to three' means 'seven minutes short of three O'clock.' Also, if before '**past**' or '**to**' **five, ten, twenty, or twenty-five** minutes are to be used, the word '**minute**' remains **silent** or **understood** (*i.e.* it is not spoken), but with other numbers the word '**minute**' is read or spoken out. Thus, we shall say '**ten past five**' or '**ten to five**', but '**twelve minutes past five**' or '**twelve minutes to five**'.

(2) 'Fifteen minutes past' is called 'Quarter past' and 'Fifteen minutes to' is called 'Quarter to'. In the same way, 'thirty minutes past' is called 'Half past', and 'Forty-five minutes to' is called 'Quarter to'.

(3) Minutes up to thirty are referred to as 'past that hour', and minutes thirty onwards are referred to as 'to the next hour'.

Thus :

2.15 = Quarter past two

3.30 = Half past three

3.45 = Quarter to four (next hour)

(4) With complete hour we use **O'clock** ; but if the reference is to hours and minutes, we **do not use O'clock**. For example, 9 O'clock, 4 O'clock, five O'clock, ten O'clock, etc. are correct. But 4.25 O'clock or three twenty O'clock are **wrong**.

(5) The period from 12 O'clock at mid-night to 12 O'clock at noon is called '**a.m.**', while the period from 12 O'clock at noon to 12 O'clock at mid-night is called '**p.m.**'

In conversation, however, **a.m.** and **p.m.** are not often used. In their place we often use morning, noon, after noon, evening, night, etc. For example, we say ten O'clock in the morning, 4.30 in the afternoon, six thirty (or half past six) in the evening, ten forty at night, etc. Twelve at midnight is called 12 O'clock at night, and twelve O'clock in the day is called 12 at noon.

Keeping all the above-noted points in mind, we give below a Table showing : How to write Time in figures, How to read the Time-figures, and how to speak them in conversation :

Time in figures	How to read	Conversational Form
10-00	Ten O'clock	Ten O'clock
11-05	Eleven five	Five minutes past eleven
11-15	Eleven fifteen	Quarter past eleven
12-30	Twelve thirty	Half past twelve
2-20	Two twenty	Twenty past two
5-45	Five forty-five	Quarter to six
10-58	Ten fifty-eight	Two minutes to eleven
11-45	Eleven forty-five	Quarter to twelve
12-00	Twelve O'clock	Twelve O'clock (at noon / at night)

Exercise

1. How will you read aloud the following dates ?

August 15, January 5, 12 October, 20 November, March 5th, April 2nd, June 23, July 1, December 25th.

2. How will you read aloud the following years ?

1400, 1700, 1808, 1907, 1914, 1939, 2005, 20025

3. How will you express in conversation the following points of time ?

8·15; 9·05; 11·30; 11·45; 2·30; 4·28; 5·55; 8·0; 10·0; 12·0; 8·30 a. m.; 4·05 p. m.; 12·00 day, 12·00 night; 6 p. m.; 9·30 p. m.