

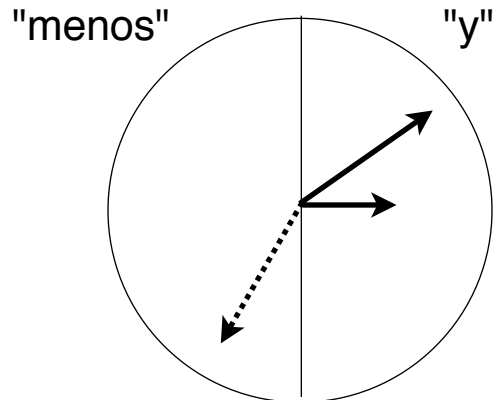
La Hora

In Spanish, the day is divided into four different time periods. Although these are generally defined by when the sun rises and sets, for our purposes we will use the time frames listed below.

morning	la mañana	6 am - 12 pm
afternoon	la tarde	12 pm - 6 pm
night	la noche	6 pm - 12 am
early morning	la madrugada	12 am - 6 am

Other important terms about time-telling include:

la medianoche	midnight
el mediodía	noon
cuarto [de hora]	quarter (of an hour)
media [hora]	half (hour)
es	it is
son	they are



One circle around the clock includes twelve hours.

We use the word "es" (is) when we say "It is one o'clock" because the number/hour "one" is singular. "Es" is also used for "midnight" or "midday" (noon) because—although these times of the day represent plural numbers on a clock, in themselves and as words, they are each singular.

We use the word "son" (are) when we identify all other numbers/hours because they are plural. For example:

Es la una.	[The hour] is one.	OR	<i>It's one o'clock.</i>
Son las dos / tres / cuatro	[The hours] are two / three / four	OR	<i>It's two... o'clock.</i>

The traditional clock is divided into vertical halves. Let's suppose it's 3 o'clock, **as the short hand shows** on the diagram above. If you follow **the long hand** "clockwise" around the outer circle, beginning with the number 12, you first meet 1, then 2, and so on. In telling time, as the long hand of the clock points to one of these numbers, it represents minutes added to the hour.

So, on the chart above, the **solid** line representing the long hand is pointing to the two, indicating that it is 3:10. The **dotted** line representing the long hand and pointing to the seven indicates another time, 3:35.

In Spanish, to add minutes to the hour, we use the word "y" (and). Therefore:

3:10	Son las tres y diez.	[The hours] are three and ten [minutes].
6:22	Son las seis y veinte.	[The hours] are six and twenty [minutes].
9:15	Son las nueve y cuarto.	[The hours] are nine and quarter [an hour].
11:30	Son las once y media.	[The hours] are eleven and half [an hour].

However, once the long hand passes the six, it is more than half-way around the clock and actually closer to the next hour. For example, is 6:31 closer to 6:00 or 7:00? It is 31 minutes away from 6:00 and only 29 minutes away from 7:00, so it is closer to 7:00.

With this in mind, the Spanish say that 6:31 is actually "Seven minus twenty-nine [minutes]." In other words, any time the long hand passes the half-way mark, to tell time, you first identify the next hour up, then subtract the minutes until that hour. So, "menos" (minus) is used rather than "y" (and). For example:

3:35	Son las <u>cuatro</u> menos veinticinco.	[The hours] are four minus twenty-five [minutes].
7:45	Son las <u>ocho</u> menos cuarto.	[The hours] are eight minus a quarter. OR "It's a quarter to eight," as we would say in English.