

English Ladder

Student Workbook

Times & Dates

A polished self-study handout designed for print or tablet use. Read the concept, notice the pattern, and then complete the matching practice set on your own.



Grammar Conce

Key Point

Common Confusions: "This Friday

Confusion with Date Formats: 3/17,

Final Notes

Visual anchor

Use the concept poster to spotlight the main language pattern in **Times & Dates** and keep the explanation visible during practice and discussion.

ENGLISH LADDER

Concept #31 ► **Times & Dates**

Note the examples of times and dates below.

10:45 It's ten forty-five (am).
It's a quarter to eleven (am).

11:03 It's eleven oh three (am).
It's three (minutes) past eleven (am).

12:22 It's twelve twenty-two (pm).
It's twenty-two (minutes) past twelve (pm).

14:30 It's two thirty (pm).
It's half past two (pm).

May 25 It's May twenty-five.
It's the twenty-fifth of May.

April 02 It's April two.
It's the second of April.

March 04 It's March four(th).
It's the fourth of March.

Note that, for dates, we use either 2 words or 4 words, and never 3 words. If you use "of", you must also use "the".

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Core Idea

In this section, we will explore additional ways to express times and dates in English, along with more alternative expressions and rigorous examples. This will help deepen your understanding and give you more flexibility in communicating times and dates.

Quick reference

Expressing Times

Exact Time (Digital Format): Example: "10:45 am" Ways to say it: "It's ten forty-five (am)." "It's quarter to eleven (am)." "It's fifteen minutes to eleven (am)." "It's ten forty-five in the morning." Formal Alternative: "The time is ten forty-five ante meridiem."

Expressing Dates

Using the Month and Date: Example: "May 25" Ways to say it: "It's May twenty-five." "It's the twenty-fifth of May." "May the twenty-fifth." Formal: "The date is the twenty-fifth of May." Example: "July 04" Ways to say it: "It's July fourth." "It's the fourth of July." "It's Independence Day." (In the United States) Formal: "The date is the fourth of July."

Final Notes on Usage

Time of Day Indicators: AM/PM: Use "am" or "pm" to specify whether the time is in the morning or afternoon/evening. Morning/Afternoon/Evening: You can also use words like "in the morning," "in the afternoon," or "in the evening" to clarify. O'clock: Use "o'clock" for exact hours, e.g., "ten o'clock."

Key Points

Expressing Times

English offers multiple ways to express the same time, depending on formality, context, and even regional differences. Let's dive into these variations:

- Exact Time (Digital Format): Example: "10:45 am" Ways to say it: "It's ten forty-five (am)." "It's quarter to eleven (am)." "It's fifteen minutes to eleven (am)." "It's ten forty-five in the morning." Formal Alternative: "The time is ten forty-five ante meridiem."
- Minutes Past the Hour: Example: "11:03 am" Ways to say it: "It's eleven oh three (am)." "It's three minutes past eleven (am)." "It's just past eleven (am)." "It's three minutes after eleven (am)." Informal: "It's a bit after eleven." Example: "07:20 am" Ways to say it: "It's seven twenty (am)." "It's twenty past seven (am)." "It's twenty minutes after seven (am)." "It's seven twenty in the morning."



- Minutes to the Hour: Example: "14:30 pm" Ways to say it: "It's two thirty (pm)." "It's half past two (pm)." "It's thirty minutes past two (pm)." Alternative: "It's half two (pm)." (Common in British English) Example: "08:45 pm" Ways to say it: "It's eight forty-five (pm)." "It's a quarter to nine (pm)." "It's fifteen minutes to nine (pm)." "It's quarter of nine (pm)." (Common in American English) Example: "09:50 am" Ways to say it: "It's nine fifty (am)." "It's ten to ten (am)." "It's ten minutes to ten (am)." "It's ten minutes before ten (am)."
- Top of the Hour: Example: "10:00 am" Ways to say it: "It's ten o'clock (am)." "It's exactly ten (am)." "It's ten in the morning." Informal: "It's ten sharp." Formal: "The time is ten ante meridiem."
- Other Relevant Examples: Example: "12:00 pm" Ways to say it: "It's twelve o'clock." "It's noon." "It's midday." Alternative: "It's twelve in the afternoon." Example: "12:00 am" Ways to say it: "It's twelve o'clock." "It's midnight." "It's the start of a new day."

Expressing Dates

Just like with time, there are various ways to express dates in English, depending on the formality, region, and context.

- Using the Month and Date: Example: "May 25" Ways to say it: "It's May twenty-five." "It's the twenty-fifth of May." "May the twenty-fifth." Formal: "The date is the twenty-fifth of May." Example: "July 04" Ways to say it: "It's July fourth." "It's the fourth of July." "It's Independence Day." (In the United States) Formal: "The date is the fourth of July."
- Using the Day and Month: Example: "April 02" Ways to say it: "It's April two." "It's the second of April." "April the second." Alternative: "The second day of April." Formal: "The date is the second of April." Example: "December 31" Ways to say it: "It's December thirty-first." "It's the thirty-first of December." "New Year's Eve." (Refers to the evening before New Year's Day) Formal: "The date is the thirty-first of December."
- Formal Date Expressions: Example: "September 15, 2024" Ways to say it: "It's September fifteenth, two thousand twenty-four." "The date is the fifteenth of September, two thousand twenty-four." Formal: "On this fifteenth day of September in the year two thousand twenty-four." Example: "March 21, 2023" Ways to say it: "It's March twenty-first, two thousand twenty-three." "The date is the twenty-first of March, two thousand twenty-three." Alternative: "On March twenty-first of the year twenty twenty-three."
- Expressing Days of the Week: Example: "Monday, October 10" Ways to say it: "It's Monday, October tenth." "Today is Monday, the tenth of October." Formal: "The day is Monday, the tenth of October." Example: "Wednesday, January 1" Ways to say it: "It's Wednesday, January first." "Today is Wednesday, the first of January." Alternative: "Wednesday, January the first." Formal: "The day is Wednesday, the first of January."
- Using Ordinal Numbers: Rule: When speaking or writing dates, ordinal numbers are used for the day. For example, "1st," "2nd," "3rd," "21st," etc. Example: "October 3" Ways to say it: "It's October third." "It's the third of October." Formal: "The date is the third of October."



- Shortened Date Expressions: Example: "6/7/24" (This could mean June 7, 2024, in American English or July 6, 2024, in British English) Important: Clarify the format when speaking or writing internationally to avoid confusion. Formal Clarification: "The date is June the seventh, twenty twenty-four." or "The date is the seventh of July, twenty twenty-four."
- Additional Example Dates: Example: "November 11" Ways to say it: "It's November eleventh." "It's the eleventh of November." "Veterans Day." (In the United States) Formal: "The date is the eleventh of November." Example: "February 14" Ways to say it: "It's February fourteenth." "It's the fourteenth of February." "Valentine's Day." Formal: "The date is the fourteenth of February."

Final Notes on Usage

- Time of Day Indicators: AM/PM: Use "am" or "pm" to specify whether the time is in the morning or afternoon/evening. Morning/Afternoon/Evening: You can also use words like "in the morning," "in the afternoon," or "in the evening" to clarify. O'clock: Use "o'clock" for exact hours, e.g., "ten o'clock."
- Formality in Dates: For formal writing, always use the full date format and consider including the year. In spoken English, simpler forms are often used, especially in informal contexts.
- Common Pitfalls: Mixing Formats: Avoid mixing formats like "the twenty-fifth May." Use either "May twenty-fifth" or "the twenty-fifth of May." Clarifying the Year: Especially when communicating across countries, make sure the year is clear to avoid confusion.

With these expanded examples and alternative expressions, you'll be better equipped to accurately and confidently communicate times and dates in various contexts, whether in conversation, writing, or formal communication.

Common Confusions: "This Friday" vs. "Next Friday"

One common area of confusion in English, especially for non-native speakers, is the difference between "this Friday" and "next Friday". Understanding the difference and using these phrases correctly can prevent misunderstandings in scheduling and planning.

Understanding "This Friday"

- "This Friday" refers to the first Friday coming up on the calendar. It implies the Friday of the current week if today is before Friday. For example: Today is Monday: "This Friday" means the Friday of the same week. Today is Thursday: "This Friday" still refers to the Friday of the same week. Today is Saturday: "This Friday" might still refer to the Friday that just passed, though some people might refer to it as "last Friday."

Understanding "Next Friday"



- "Next Friday" typically refers to the Friday of the following week. It means the Friday that comes after "this Friday." For example: Today is Monday: "Next Friday" is not the Friday of the same week, but the Friday of the following week. Today is Thursday: "Next Friday" still refers to the Friday of the following week, not tomorrow. Today is Saturday: "Next Friday" usually refers to the Friday of the upcoming week, not the Friday that is just six days away.

Sources of Confusion

- Mid-Week Ambiguity: If today is close to Friday, say Wednesday or Thursday, people might get confused between "this Friday" and "next Friday."
- Cultural Differences: Different cultures might interpret "this" and "next" differently, depending on how they count days in the week.
- Informal Contexts: In informal conversation, people might use these terms loosely, leading to potential misunderstandings.

Ways to Avoid Confusion

- Be Specific with Dates: Instead of saying "this Friday" or "next Friday," say "Friday, [date]" to specify the exact day you mean. For example, "Friday, March 17" is clear and unambiguous.
- Clarify with the Listener: Ask for confirmation. For example: "When you say next Friday, do you mean the 24th or the 17th?" This ensures everyone is on the same page.
- Use "This Coming" or "The Following": Use phrases like "this coming Friday" for clarity. For "next Friday," you can say "the Friday of next week" or "the following Friday" to be clearer.
- Count the Days: If it's still unclear, you can count the number of days. For example: "Do you mean Friday in three days, or Friday in ten days?"

Confusion with Date Formats: 3/17/2024 vs. 17/3/2024

Another common source of confusion, especially in international communication, is how different countries format dates. The same numeric date can mean entirely different things depending on the format used.

American vs. International Date Formats

- American Format (MM/DD/YYYY): Example: 3/17/2024 is understood as March 17, 2024. Explanation: In the United States, the standard format places the month first, followed by the day, and then the year. Common Usage: This format is common in the U.S., Canada (sometimes), and the Philippines.
- International Format (DD/MM/YYYY): Example: 17/3/2024 is understood as March 17, 2024 in most of the world. Explanation: In many countries, the day comes first, followed by the month, and then the year. Common Usage: This format is standard in Europe, much of Asia, Australia, and Africa.
- Year-Month-Day Format (YYYY/MM/DD): Example: 2024/03/17 is understood as March 17, 2024. Explanation: This format is most common in official contexts, especially in East Asia, including China, Japan, and Korea. Common Usage: It's also the standard for many international standards, like ISO 8601, and often used in databases or formal documents.



Sources of Confusion

- Same Date, Different Interpretations: The date 3/7/2024 could be interpreted as March 7, 2024, in the U.S. (MM/DD/YYYY) or as July 3, 2024, in Europe (DD/MM/YYYY). This can lead to scheduling errors and misunderstandings.
- Cultural Expectations: People from different countries might assume their own format is universal, leading to miscommunication.
- Contextual Clues: In some contexts, it might be obvious which format is being used (e.g., if the day is above 12), but this is not always the case.

Ways to Avoid Confusion

- Spell Out the Month: Example: Instead of writing 3/7/2024 or 7/3/2024, write March 7, 2024 or 7 March 2024. This completely removes ambiguity.
- Use International Standard (ISO 8601): Example: 2024-03-07 is clear and unambiguous. This format is gaining popularity in global contexts and is increasingly recommended for international communication.
- Contextual Clarification: Example: When writing a date in a potentially confusing format, include a note clarifying the intended format. E.g., 3/7/2024 (MM/DD/YYYY).
- Use Full Date Formats in Formal Documents: For official or legal documents, always use the full date with the month spelled out to prevent any possible misinterpretation. E.g., March 17, 2024 or 17th March 2024.

Final Notes

Being aware of these potential confusions and taking steps to clarify your communication will help prevent misunderstandings. Whether you're discussing the date of an upcoming meeting or writing an international document, using clear and unambiguous expressions ensures that everyone involved has the same understanding.



Practice Check

Answer the quiz questions below with responses consistent with the grammar concepts taught in this article.

ITEM 01

What time is it if the clock shows 07:15 am?

Answer: _____

ITEM 02

Which of the following is a correct way to say "14:30 pm"?

Answer: _____

ITEM 03

How would you correctly express the date "March 04"?

Answer: _____

ITEM 04

How would you clarify "next Friday" in a conversation to avoid confusion?

Answer: _____

ITEM 05

Which format is correct in American English for writing the date "April 2, 2024"?

Answer: _____



ITEM 06

How do you correctly express "11:03 am"?

Answer: _____

ITEM 07

Which phrase is more appropriate to ensure clarity: "This coming Friday" or "Next Friday"?

Answer: _____

ITEM 08

What does "3/17/2024" mean in the American date format?

Answer: _____

ITEM 09

How would you express the time 08:45 pm in an informal setting?

Answer: _____

ITEM 10

How can you ensure clarity when writing a date internationally?

Answer: _____

ITEM 11

Which of the following is correct for "December 31, 2024" in an international standard format?

Answer: _____

**ITEM 12**

Which is a clear and correct way to say "09:50 am"?

Answer: _____

ITEM 13

What is a formal way to express the date "May 25, 2024"?

Answer: _____

ITEM 14

How do you correctly express "12:00 pm"?

Answer: _____

ITEM 15

If today is Wednesday and you say "this Friday," which day do you mean?

Answer: _____

ITEM 16

Which of these is the best way to avoid confusion when discussing dates internationally?

Answer: _____

ITEM 17

Which is the correct way to express the time "10:00 am"?

Answer: _____

**ITEM 18**

What does "17/3/2024" mean in the European date format?

Answer: _____

ITEM 19

How would you clarify the meaning of "3/7/2024" when writing to an international audience?

Answer: _____

ITEM 20

How can you avoid ambiguity when talking about "next Friday"?

Answer: _____

ITEM 21

Which is a correct way to express "April 02" in a sentence?

Answer: _____

ITEM 22

Which phrase is more universally understood: "half past two" or "14:30"?

Answer: _____

ITEM 23

If today is Thursday, what is meant by "this Friday"?

Answer: _____

**ITEM 24**

Which of the following is a correct way to clarify "3/7/2024" in writing?

Answer: _____



Self-check Answer Key

Use the key after you have completed every item on your own.

ITEM 01

It's seven fifteen in the morning.

ITEM 02

It's half past two (pm). Incorrect options: "It's fourteen thirty." (This is not incorrect but less commonly used), "It's half to three." (This is incorrect as "half to" is not a valid expression).

ITEM 03

It's March fourth.

ITEM 04

Say, "Do you mean Friday the 24th or the 31st?" Incorrect options: "Next Friday is always the following week." (This can be ambiguous), "Next Friday means the upcoming Friday." (This is incorrect; it means the following Friday after the upcoming one).

ITEM 05

4/2/2024 Incorrect options: "2/4/2024" (This is the European format), "April 02, 2024" (Adding a zero before the day is not typical in the U.S.).

ITEM 06

It's eleven oh three (am).

ITEM 07

This coming Friday. Incorrect options: "Next Friday" (Could lead to confusion), "Friday after this Friday" (Unnecessary complexity).

ITEM 08

March 17, 2024 Incorrect options: "17th March, 2024" (This is the European format), "July 3, 2024" (Misinterpretation of the date format).

ITEM 09

It's a quarter to nine (pm). Incorrect options: "It's eight forty-five in the morning." (Incorrect time of day), "It's forty-five past eight." (Incorrect phrasing).

ITEM 10

Spell out the month, e.g., "March 7, 2024". Incorrect options: "Use any format, it will be understood." (Assuming understanding is incorrect), "Always use the European format." (May not be understood globally).

**ITEM 11**

2024-12-31 Incorrect options: "12/31/2024" (American format), "31/12/2024" (European format).

ITEM 12

It's ten to ten (am). Incorrect options: "It's nine fifty in the afternoon." (Incorrect time of day), "It's nine o'clock fifty." (Incorrect structure).

ITEM 13

The twenty-fifth of May, two thousand twenty-four. Incorrect options: "May the twenty-fifth of two thousand and twenty-four" (Incorrect order and too verbose), "Twenty-five May, twenty-four" (Too informal and truncated).

ITEM 14

It's noon. Incorrect options: "It's twelve noon pm." (Redundant and incorrect), "It's twelve o'clock at night." (Incorrect time of day).

ITEM 15

The Friday of the current week. Incorrect options: "The Friday of next week." (This would be "next Friday"), "The previous Friday." (This would be "last Friday").

ITEM 16

Use the full date format, spelling out the month. Incorrect options: "Use local date formats." (May lead to confusion), "Write the date in numbers only." (Numbers can be interpreted differently).

ITEM 17

It's ten o'clock in the morning. Incorrect options: "It's ten o'clock pm." (Incorrect time of day), "It's ten in the evening." (Incorrect time of day).

ITEM 18

March 17, 2024 Incorrect options: "17th July, 2024" (Misinterpretation of the format), "March 3, 2024" (Incorrect date).

ITEM 19

Spell out the month as "March 7, 2024". Incorrect options: "Leave it as 3/7/2024, it will be understood." (Not true for all audiences), "Write it as 7/3/2024." (This is the European format and may still be confusing).

ITEM 20

Specify the date, e.g., "Friday, March 24". Incorrect options: "Just say next Friday, everyone will understand." (This is often not true), "Say next week's Friday." (Still potentially confusing).

ITEM 21

It's the second of April. Incorrect options: "It's April second." (Acceptable but less formal), "It's the two of April." (Incorrect usage of "two" instead of "second").

**ITEM 22**

Half past two. Incorrect options: "14:30" (May be unclear to those not familiar with the 24-hour clock), "Two thirty sharp." (This is clear, but "half past two" is more traditional).

ITEM 23

The Friday of the current week (tomorrow). Incorrect options: "The Friday of the following week." (This would be "next Friday"), "Last Friday." (Refers to the previous Friday).

ITEM 24

March 7, 2024 Incorrect options: "7th March, 2024" (This is correct in the European format but still ambiguous), "3rd July, 2024" (Misinterpretation of the format).