
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

6 Minute Vocabulary

Time expressions with 'in', 'on' and 'at'



This is not a word-for-word transcript

Neil

Hello and welcome to 6 Minute Vocabulary. I'm Neil...

Catherine

A very smart Neil... And I'm Catherine. Why are you wearing a suit, Neil? You're looking very smart for work.

Neil

Yes you're right, I am wearing a suit because I'm going to a wedding **at one o'clock** ...

Catherine

Very good! I love weddings.

Neil

I love weddings too. I'm going to another one **on Saturday!**

Catherine

Fantastic Neil. And **at** and **on** are two of the words we're discussing in today's programme...

Neil

Yes, because... we're talking about time expressions with **in**, **on** and **at**.

Catherine

We'll explain why we say **at one o'clock** but **on Saturday**.

Neil

We'll give you lots of examples...

Catherine

Let's start by listening to Mike and Rob. They are trying to find a time to meet up.

Neil

Think about this question while you listen: what time can Rob meet Mike?

INSERT

Mike

How about lunch **on Monday, Rob?**

Rob

Well... I've got a meeting **at 11.30.**

Mike

OK, are you free **on Tuesday?**

Rob

Hmm... the engineer's coming **at lunchtime.** The washing machine's flooded again! It happened **at Easter,** too.

Mike

Well, what are you doing **in the afternoon?**

Rob

Sorry - I'm playing football.

Mike

Ok - perhaps we could meet in the pub **on Saturday evening?**

Rob

We've got guests **at the weekend.** How about this afternoon **at two thirty?**

Catherine

So, we asked you: What time can Rob meet Mike?

Neil

And the answer is: **at two thirty.**

Catherine

When we say a particular time on the clock, we use **at.**

Neil

So, we say **at two thirty ... at three o'clock.**

Catherine

We also use **at** in other time expressions. Listen out for them in this clip.

INSERT CLIP 1

Mike

How about lunch **on Monday, Rob?**

Rob

Well... I've got a meeting **at 11.30.**

Mike

OK, are you free **on Tuesday?**

Rob

Hmm... the engineer's coming **at lunchtime.** The washing machine's flooded again! It happened **at Easter,** too.

Catherine

So Rob had a meeting **at 11.30.** It's **at** because it's a time.

Neil

That's right. We also heard **at lunchtime.** We use **at** with particular points during the day, like mealtimes... so it's **at breakfast, at lunch, at dinner.**

Catherine

... and also we say... **at noon... at midnight.**

Neil

Now Rob said his washing machine flooded **at Easter.** We use **at** to talk about a special day or group of days. So, it's **at Easter, at New Year.**

Catherine

At Christmas. So that's **at.** Let's look at **on.** We use **on** with days of the week. So... **on Monday, on Tuesday.**

Neil

We also use **on** with specific dates... **on the third of May, on June the 20th.**

Catherine

...and we use **on** with specific days: **on Christmas Day, on Easter Sunday, on my birthday.**

Neil

That's right. But remember it's **at Easter, at Christmas** when we are referring to the general time period.

Catherine

Let's listen to another clip with more time expressions. Listen out for the time expression with **in**.

INSERT CLIP 2

Mike

Well, what are you doing **in the afternoon**?

Rob

Sorry - I'm playing football.

Mike

Ok - perhaps we could meet in the pub **on Saturday evening**?

Rob

We've got guests **at the weekend**. How about this afternoon **at two thirty**?

Neil

So we had **in the afternoon**. We use **in** with parts of the day, so it's **in the morning, in the afternoon, in the evening**.

Catherine

But did you notice that it's **on Saturday morning**. If we use a day of the week plus **morning, afternoon or evening**, we use **on**.

Neil

We also use **in** with seasons, so it's **in spring, in the winter**.

Catherine

We use **in** with months and years, so it's **in June, in 1996**.

Neil

Notice also that Rob said **at the weekend**.

Catherine

Rob speaks British English so he used **at the weekend**. Some other speakers will say **on the weekend**. It's perfectly fine.

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6 Minute Vocabulary from the BBC.

Catherine

And we're talking about time expressions with **in, on and at**.

Neil

So, to recap, we use **on** with days of the week, dates and special days.

Catherine

We use **at** with times and particular points in the day.

Neil

British people say **at the weekend**.

Catherine

And we also say **at** with festivals.

Neil

We use **in** for seasons, months and years.

Catherine

And now for a quiz. Fill the gaps with **in**, **on** or **at**. Ready? Number one. What do you usually do [sfx: beep] the weekend?

Neil

And the answer is **at**.

Catherine

Good. Number two. Don't be late! The film starts [sfx: beep] nine.

Neil

And the answer is **at**.

Catherine

And the last one. There are usually fireworks in London [sfx: beep] New Year's Eve.

Neil

And the answer is **on**. Well done if you got them all right.

Catherine

Now for today's top tip for learning vocabulary: Instead of learning individual new words, try learning small chunks of language like time phrases. They will be easier to learn and they make your English sound more natural.

Neil

There's more about this at bbclearningenglish.com. Join us again for more 6 Minute Vocabulary.

Both

Bye!

Vocabulary points to take away

Time expressions with at

at one o'clock / two thirty
at breakfast / dinner / lunchtime
at noon / midday / night
at the weekend

Time expressions with on

on 3rd May
on Christmas Day
on Saturday morning

Time expressions with in

in the morning / afternoon / evening
in spring / summer / autumn / winter
in 1996