



24 Hours in a Day

A lesson plan to teach military time using a 24-hour clock.

Grades: 8
Disciplines: Math

You all know that the number of hours in a day is 24. But why do we not have a 24 o'clock?

Have you heard kids count 10 o'clock, 11 o'clock, 12 o'clock, 13 o'clock and then giggle? Well, why not a thirteen o'clock – what would thirteen o'clock be?

If I say to come to a surprise party at my house at 8 o'clock, do I mean in the morning or evening? We have to remember to say AM or PM don't we, or we could be the one that gets the surprise.

Have you ever watched a show with soldiers in it and they say they are going into battle at 1700 hours? They are using military time that uses a 24-hour clock, instead of the 12-hour clock we are used to. Military time numbers the 24 hours of the day from 1 to 24, rather than repeating the cycle of 12 hours twice. In several countries, time is also kept on this 24-hour cycle.

So, instead of saying 1 am, soldiers say 0100 hours (pronounced zero one hundred), then 0200, 0300, and finally 1200 hours for 12 noon. Then for 1 pm, they keep going and say 1300 (pronounced thirteen hundred). Never pronounce the hours in thousands. (Ex. 1500) You should pronounce 1-5-0-0 as fifteen hundred instead of one thousand five hundred. Sometimes instead of saying "zero two hundred hours," people say "oh two hundred hours," which is technically incorrect because "O" is a letter.

Sometimes airlines, trains, and bus lines put military time on your tickets. So if your ticket says that your flight leaves at 1500 hours, what time is it on our civilian clock? 0200? 1700? 1200?

Since you know that much, can you explain the time twenty-four hundred hours? What about 0000 hours?

Note that the official military clock begins with 0000 hours, which is midnight. Midnight is also unofficially called 2400 hours.

Adapted from a lesson plan by Jasmine House