

Time

Time is pretty straightforward in Irish. Here are the key things to know; numbers 1-60, the words for before and after, the words for quarter (to & past) and half (past), the word order. There is an abbreviated explanation followed by a long explanation. Use what you will.

Short version;

1. Before; use “chun” (pronounced hun or kun). Ulster dialect will use “go dtí.”
2. After; use “tar éis” except with half past, then use “i ndiaidh” (i nyiah or i nyay). Ulster dialect will use “i ndiaidh” more often.
3. Quarter is “ceathrú” and half is “leath”
4. Use the whole hour, nearest quarter-hour or half-hour and just avoid using minutes at all. This is entirely acceptable in conversational Irish.
5. Shorten it up as much as you can instead of being long and proper.
6. Using this strategy, you only need to know numbers 1-12 and these few rules to get by.

Examples:

1. Cén t-am é?
 - a. 5 :00 Tá sé a cúig a chlog [it is five o'clock]
 - b. 8 :15 Ceathrú tar éis a hocht [Ceathrú=quarter, tar éis=after]
 - c. 1 :45 Ceathrú chun a dó [chun=before]
or Ceathrú go dtí a dó [go dtí = another form of before]
 - d. 6 :30 Leath i ndiaidh a sé [leath=half, i ndiaidh= another after]
or, Leathuair tar éis a sé [leathuair=half hour]
 - e. 11:15 Ceathrú tar éis a haon deag

Long version with pronunciation help;

1. Options for “before” or “to,” as in “It’s a quarter to three.” The two primary options are “go dtí” (guh jee) and “chun” (hun or kun). After doing a little research, “chun” is the preferred and more common word for before when talking about time.
2. Options for “past” or “after,” are “tar éis” (tar aysh (ay like end of “yay”) and “i ndiaidh” (can be pronounced differently, most commonly “i nyiah” or “i nyay.” In MOST cases, “tar éis” is the preferred phrase for past or after when discussing time (exception for half-past below).

3. Quarter or 15 minutes is “ceathrú.” The closest I can describe this word is the “ca” at the beginning of the word “cat,” followed by “threw” but the th sound is sort of blown through your teeth instead of using your tongue to say “threw.” It’s more like “hroo.” Ca-hroo is the best way I can describe it.
Ceathrú chun a dó = quarter to two.
4. The word for half is “leath” with a slender “L” sound, so it isn’t like an English L like in loud or later, it’s shorter. One of the experts can discuss this next class. To me, the word is like the beginning of the word “laugh” but with a thinner L sound. Say laugh, but drop the “f” sound and you’ll be close.
Apparently, “half-past” is the only time you are supposed to use “i ndiaidh.”
5. Two words for minute you can use; nóiméad (no-maid) and bomaite (bow-ma-cha). Not exact but close.

Word order;

-It is 10 minutes after three.

-Tá sé deich nóiméad tar éis a trí. or Tá sé deich bomaite tar éis a trí. You can add “a chlog” at the end as well if you want to be complete “Tá sé deich nóiméad tar éis a trí a chlog.” As I understand it, shorter forms (dropping “tá sé” and “a chlog” are more oft used and more conversational.

For example, you can shorten it to “Deich tar éis a trí” (3:10) or Deich chun a trí (2:50).

Substitute ceathrú and you can use the same format for quarter- and half-past.

It is quarter to five.

Tá sé ceathrú chun a cúig.

It is half past five. This is the primary case for using “i ndiaidh”.

Tá sé leath i ndiaidh a cúig. If one assumes the person knows the hour, this can be condensed all the way to “leath i ndiaidh” (half-past).

More punctuated examples. What time is it? “Ceathrú chun a cúig” (quarter to five) “Cúig deag tar éis a cúig” (15 past 5).

As far as I can tell, you don’t have to put the minutes in the middle of numbers as with age. So, naoi deag nóiméad tar éis a cúig is fine and don’t worry about “naoi nóiméad deag tar éis a cúig.” The later MIGHT be more correct, but we aren’t shooting for perfection.

One last thing. You can use “thart” which means “around” with time. Tá sé thart ar a cúig.” It is around 5.

Ok. That’s enough!