

# Punctuality & Lateness

People & Society

## - Teacher's Insights -

 ≈60 minutes

 B2 – C1

 reading, 'time' expressions, key word transformations

Today's class focuses on punctuality, lateness, and 'time' expressions. If you have a shorter class time and a smaller group, consider adopting a [flipped classroom](#) where students read the article and complete the reading activity before the class and use the class time to focus on speaking. The activities in this class are similar to those found in many of the official examinations.

### **Introduction:**                      **Ask and answer the questions as a group.**

These questions are designed to introduce the class and the topic. They may also be similar to Speaking Part 1 of the First and Advanced Cambridge examinations.

1. Do you consider yourself to be a punctual person?
2. Do you often find yourself apologising for being late?
3. How do you feel when you are waiting for someone who is late?
4. Have you ever been late for a really important event? What happened?
5. What strategies do you use to help you to be on time more often?
6. Have you ever heard of 'chronic lateness'?

### **Reading:**                              **Skim the text and then talk about it as a group.**

This text contains numerous expressions using the word 'time' and related to time. After skimming, students will have to match the headings to the paragraphs. The headings are given below and the reason for each answer is **highlighted and underlined** in the text.

#### A. **(5) A positive outlook or a genuine problem?**

"I'm running late!" While we've all had to send this text while running to some meeting or appointment once in a while, chronic lateness is something else. It's a persistent pattern of being late for appointments, meetings, or events. Some individuals might see it as being **overly optimistic**, but for many—those who are hardly ever on time, if ever—chronic lateness has **deeper consequences**.

#### B. **(4) Kick the habit, shift the mindset.**

So why don't people who are late all the time just leave the house a little bit earlier? Why is it that they're always short of time? As creatures of habit, our routines can become deeply ingrained in our minds. **Breaking the habit** of chronic lateness takes time and effort because it involves **rewiring these mental pathways**. It's not something that can be achieved overnight. In fact, we must remind ourselves time and time again not to be naïve and to actively work not just on leaving the house a little earlier but starting the whole process of getting ready a little earlier.

#### C. **(2) Small steps, not leaps and bounds.**

Similar to addiction, chronic lateness can be tough to shake off. One approach is to develop new habits that will stand the test of time. It's essential to **start small** and repeat successful strategies **before applying them to larger goals**. To embark on a new journey of being (mostly) punctual, you can **break down larger tasks into smaller ones**, set reminders and alarms, and avoid multitasking when getting yourself ready.

# Punctuality & Lateness

## People & Society

### D. (1) Do not strive for perfection.

On the other hand, it's important to recognise that being pressed for time now and then is inevitable. Some people find it helpful to be self-compassionate and aim for progress rather than 100% punctuality. Setting unattainable goals can lead to frustration and discourage people from trying. Life is unpredictable, and unexpected events can sometimes cause us to run behind schedule. It's crucial not to beat ourselves up.

### E. (3) Change is difficult but not impossible.

In conclusion, chronic lateness can be a tough habit to break, but with time, effort, and self-compassion, new habits can be forged that promote punctuality. It is an achievable goal. These new mental pathways will help us to be punctual more often and reduce the impact of chronic lateness on our lives. Will we be successful? Well, only time will tell.

### Matching Headings: Match headings 1-5 with paragraphs A-E above.

1. Do not strive for perfection.
2. Small steps, not leaps and bounds.
3. Change is difficult but not impossible.
4. Kick the habit, shift the mindset.
5. A positive outlook or a genuine problem?



### Grammar Focus: Read the paragraph again and identify the expressions with 'time'. Then, follow the instructions below.

This activity is, as described below, very similar to those found in certain exams. In this case, the answers are found in the reading text and all contain the word 'time', which will help students.

In some English exams, you may be asked to do an activity called 'key word transformations'. In this activity, you will need to rewrite a sentence using a given word, keeping the same meaning as the original sentence. Depending on the exam, you will typically be able to use 2-6 words. The given word must not be altered in any way.

example: A. I'm sorry, I'm not going to arrive on time!

key word: RUNNING

B. I'm sorry, I'm running late!

1. A. Tiffany is almost always late.

key word: HARDLY

B. Tiffany is hardly ever on time.

2. A. I haven't got long to complete my project and I'm worried I won't finish it.

key word: SHORT

B. I'm worried I won't finish my project, I'm short of time / short on time.

# Punctuality & Lateness

## People & Society

3. A. I've told you repeatedly that I don't know where it is.  
key word: TIME  
B. I've told you [time and time again](#) that I don't know where it is.
4. A. The architecture of the ancient Roman Colosseum has endured the years.  
key word: TEST  
B. The architecture of the ancient Roman Colosseum has [stood the test of time](#).
5. A. Because of my busy schedule, I'm feeling really rushed today.  
key word: PRESSED  
B. I'm feeling [pressed for time](#) today because I have meetings all day.
6. A. I guess the future will reveal whether I'll be able to achieve my goals.  
key word: TELL  
B. I don't know if I'll be able to achieve my goals, but [\(only\) time will tell](#).

**Speaking:**                      **Answer this question for each of the following situations:  
What time would you arrive?**

This final speaking activity is designed to get students to discuss how punctuality may vary depending on the situation; sometimes, and in some cultures, a little lateness is acceptable or expected; other times, you need to arrive early to be on time. Allow students to give their own opinions.

1. You're invited to a work colleague's party at 7pm, but you don't want to be the first one there.
2. Your friend's landing at the airport at 12 noon and you've agreed to pick them up.
3. You've got a job interview for a new company at 10am in their central offices.
4. You're going to see a huge international singer in concert. The concert starts at 8pm.
5. You're going to the cinema to see a film that officially starts at 6pm.

**Extra Activity:**                      **Exam-style speaking activity.**

Ask students to think of some situations where being late could have negative impacts. Then, put them on the board. If they struggle, some ideas could be:

- being late for a flight
- being late for school or work
- being late for an interview
- being late for a film at the cinema

Then, ask them to choose two and talk for at least 60 seconds about how being late could affect them. Once they have done, ask another student to continue for at least 30 seconds about another one of the topics.