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# BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

## Take Away English 随身英语

### How late is too late? 多晚算太晚?

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Vocabulary: time 词汇: 时间

**Time flies**, or so they say. No matter where you are, humans are constantly measuring and checking time. Some of us are good at it – planning and doing things way **ahead of time** - while others are always trying to **beat the clock** and do things **at the eleventh hour**. And that's only if you're **on time**. What about if you are **behind time**?

**Tardiness** can be serious. If you were one minute late for work, would you resign? It may sound extreme to many of us, but that is exactly what occurred in the UK upper chamber of parliament, the House of Lords, in January 2018. International development minister Lord Bates arrived one minute late, and, as a result, was unable to answer a **scheduled** question. Instead of trying to **make up for lost time**, as many might do, he resigned on the spot. He apologised for his discourtesy and stated that he was ashamed. His resignation, though, was not accepted by the UK prime minister.

So, how **late** is too late? Many cultures take **punctuality** very seriously, whereas others seem to accept **lagging** behind as just the normal way of things. Members of the BBC from various different cultures were asked about the concept of **timekeeping** in their native countries and responded with a raft of answers.

BBC employees from Latin America, Rwanda and Sri Lanka said that there are more flexible attitudes to timekeeping in their cultures. In Latin America, things may happen five minutes, 20 minutes, an hour or even two after they were planned. Whereas, in Sri Lanka, lateness is a part of the daily routine. This is because of poor infrastructure and heavy traffic conditions. In Rwanda, those who attend to **deadlines** with **rigid timekeeping** are said to be 'like a typical European'. This is in a place where it is not unusual to arrive at 11am for a meeting which started at nine.

On the other hand, German and Japanese employees mentioned a stricter adherence to time. In Japan, it is common to make an effort to arrive **with time to spare** for an appointment. Those who arrived **at the stroke of** nine to a meeting starting at nine a.m. would be considered late. In Germany, however, if a dinner party were to begin at eight, a person who had arrived five minutes **prior**, may walk around the block to ensure that they arrive at eight **on the dot**.

It seems that the answer is subjective, and what is considered acceptable is based on culture. That said, if you don't mind waiting, it might be best to attend your appointments **in good time**. And if the worst comes to the worst, remember the old English proverb. **Better late than never**.

### 词汇表

|                              |                        |
|------------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>time flies</b>            | 时光飞逝                   |
| <b>ahead of time</b>         | 提前                     |
| <b>beat the clock</b>        | “战胜时间”，提前完成工作，赶时间（做某事） |
| <b>at the eleventh hour</b>  | 在最后一刻，在最后时刻            |
| <b>on time</b>               | 按时，准时                  |
| <b>behind time</b>           | 迟到                     |
| <b>tardiness</b>             | 延迟，拖拉                  |
| <b>scheduled</b>             | 已安排的                   |
| <b>make up for lost time</b> | 弥补失去的时间                |
| <b>late</b>                  | 晚的，迟的                  |
| <b>punctuality</b>           | 准时性，守时                 |
| <b>lag</b>                   | 掉队，滞后                  |
| <b>timekeeping</b>           | 守时                     |
| <b>deadline</b>              | 截止日期，最后期限              |
| <b>rigid timekeeping</b>     | 严格的时间规定                |
| <b>with time to spare</b>    | 有富余时间                  |
| <b>at the stroke of</b>      | 刚好在...的时候              |

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|                               |                 |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>prior</b>                  | 在...之前          |
| <b>on the dot</b>             | 准时              |
| <b>in good time</b>           | 提早，有充裕时间的       |
| <b>better late than never</b> | 晚来总比不来强；迟做总比不做好 |

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## 测验与练习

### 1. 阅读课文并回答问题。

1. What did Lord Bates do when he arrived late at the House of Lords in January 2018?
2. True or false: *All cultures have the same attitude towards punctuality.*
3. Which three cultures mentioned in the text have a more flexible attitude to timekeeping?
4. What would German people do if they found themselves five minutes early for a party?
5. Which word in the text means 'rudeness'?

### 2. 请在不参考课文的情况下完成下列练习。选择一个意思合适的单词填入句子的空格处。

1. Ladies and Gentlemen. Due to our speedy take off and the calm weather, I am pleased to say we are currently 15 minutes \_\_\_\_\_.

|         |             |      |               |
|---------|-------------|------|---------------|
| on time | behind time | late | ahead of time |
|---------|-------------|------|---------------|

2. If you're going to work on the railroad, you'll need \_\_\_\_\_. You can't be late by even half a minute.

|           |           |            |                   |
|-----------|-----------|------------|-------------------|
| tardiness | scheduled | on the dot | rigid timekeeping |
|-----------|-----------|------------|-------------------|

3. The register said I was late, but actually I arrived 5 minutes \_\_\_\_\_ to the recorded time.

|              |       |                    |         |
|--------------|-------|--------------------|---------|
| in good time | prior | with time to spare | lagging |
|--------------|-------|--------------------|---------|

4. They say that the ghost will appear on October 31<sup>st</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ midnight.

|         |           |                  |            |
|---------|-----------|------------------|------------|
| on time | scheduled | at the stroke of | on the dot |
|---------|-----------|------------------|------------|

5. I had to quit. I loved the work, but I couldn't deal with all the \_\_\_\_\_. You never had enough time to do anything.

|           |           |         |              |
|-----------|-----------|---------|--------------|
| tardiness | deadlines | lagging | in good time |
|-----------|-----------|---------|--------------|

## 答案

1. 阅读课文并回答问题。

1. What did Lord Bates do when he arrived one minute late at the House of Lords in January 2018?

**He apologised for his discourtesy and stated that he was ashamed. He then resigned on the spot.**

2. True or false: *All cultures have the same attitude towards punctuality.*

**False. Many cultures take punctuality very seriously, whereas others seem to accept lagging behind as just the way of things.**

3. Which three cultures mentioned in the text have a more flexible attitude to timekeeping?

**BBC employees from Latin America, Rwanda and Sri Lanka mentioned more flexible attitudes to timekeeping in their cultures.**

4. What might German people do if they found themselves five minutes early for a party?

**They may walk around the block to ensure that they arrive at eight on the dot.**

5. Which word in the text means 'rudeness'?

**'Discourtesy' (He apologised for his discourtesy and stated that he was ashamed.)**

2. 请在不参考课文的情况下完成下列练习。选择一个意思合适的单词填入句子的空格处。

1. Ladies and Gentlemen. Due to our speedy take off and the calm weather, I am pleased to say we are currently 15 minutes **ahead of time**.

2. If you're going to work on the railroad, you'll need **rigid timekeeping**. You can't be late by even half a minute.

3. The register said I was late, but actually I arrived 5 minutes **prior** to the recorded time.

4. They say that the ghost will appear on October 31<sup>st</sup> **at the stroke of** midnight.

5. I had to quit. I loved the work, but I couldn't deal with all the **deadlines**. You never had enough time to do anything.