Just like English, Arabic has both cardinal (regular) numbers – “one, two, three….etc.”

and “ordinal” (sequence) numbers – “first, second, third….etc.”

The ordinal numbers are very important because they are used for telling time. Note, they are also used for all the other functions that they perform in English “the first state,” “the third class”.

If you look at the chart below, you will see that ordinal numbers are all formed using the same pattern. You can see they also have masculine and feminine forms, depending on the gender of the noun you’re describing. In most of them, you can see how the pattern is based on the cardinal number. “First” is an exception, as it comes from a different root than the root for “one”, just like in English:



Ordinal fem

Ordinal Masc

Number

Telling time: To tell time, use the word ساعة “hour,” plus the ordinal number (first, second, third)[[1]](#footnote-1) for the hour:

Example:

الساعة الخامسة - Five O’clock

The exception is “one o’clock”, which is based on the cardinal, rather than the ordinal number:

الساعة الواحدة

REMEMBER: Make sure both parts match in gender (hour is feminine) and definiteness (it is, by definition, definite).

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| one o’clock | الساعةُ الواحدةُ |
| two o’clock | الساعةُ الثانيةُ |
| three “ | الساعةُ الثالثةُ |
| four “ | الساعةُ الرابعةُ |
| five “ | الساعةُ الخامسةُ |
| six “ | الساعةُ السادسةُ |
| seven “ | الساعةُ السابعة |
| eight “ | الساعةُ الثامنةُ |
| nine “ | الساعةُ التاسعةُ |
| ten “ | الساعةُ العاشرةُ |
| eleven “ | الساعةُ الحاديةَ عشرةَ |
| twelve “ | الساعةُ الثانيةَ عشرةَ |

 Then, of course, just like in English, we can add and subtract things to the hour:





Telling time: To tell time, use the word ساعة “hour,” plus the ordinal number (first, second, third)[[2]](#footnote-2) for the hour:

Example:

الساعة الخامسة - Five O’clock

The exception is “one o’clock”:

الساعة الواحدة

1. It is common in speech to hear the regular, cardinal form of the number used (خمسة vs. خامسة ) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. It is common in speech to hear the regular, cardinal form of the number used (خمسة vs. خامسة ) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)