

Time Zones and Why They Exist



Warm-up questions

1. What time do you get up?
2. What time is it now?
3. What time is it in Hokkaido?
4. How about Korea?
5. How about England?

Vocabulary

- | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| 1 notice | 13 cause problems |
| 2 daytime | 14 invent |
| 3 time zones | 15 decide |
| 4 exist | 16 chose |
| 5 spin around | 17 east |
| 6 face | 18 ahead of |
| 7 round | 19 mean |
| 8 fix | 20 midnight |
| 9 be divided into | 21 still |
| 10 different from | 22 understand |
| 11 for example | 23 remind |
| 12 correct | 24 while |

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Let's read!

Have you ever talked to someone in another country and noticed that it's daytime for them but nighttime for you? This is because of time zones. But why do time zones exist?

The Earth spins around once every 24 hours. This spinning gives us day and night. When one side of the Earth faces the sun, it is day. When it turns away from the sun, it is night. Because the Earth is round and always turning, not everyone can have the same time at once.

To fix this, the world is divided into 24 time zones. Each time zone is about one hour different from the next. For example, when it is 3:00 p.m. in Japan, it is 7:00 a.m. in France. Time zones help people know the correct time in their area.

Before time zones, each city used its own local time. This caused problems when trains and telephones were invented. In 1884, world leaders decided to make a system with time zones. They chose one place as the starting point: a city in England called Greenwich. This is called Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) or UTC.

Japan is far east of Greenwich, so it is ahead of many other countries. Japan is in the UTC+9 time zone. That means Japan is 9 hours ahead of Greenwich. So, when the clock turns midnight in Japan, it is still the day before in many places, like Europe or the United States. That's why Japan often gets a new day or New Year earlier than most other countries.

Time zones help us understand the world better. They also remind us that while we all live on the same planet, our time can feel very different.

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Comprehension Questions

- 1 Why do we have day and night on Earth?
- 2 How many time zones are there in the world?
- 3 What is the name of the city where the world's time system started?
- 4 What time zone is Japan in?
- 5 Why does Japan start a new day earlier than many other countries?

Useful expressions

In my opinion, having only one world time would be...
(私の考えでは、世界中が1つの時間を使うことは…)

It would be strange if...
(もし～だったら、変な感じがすると思います)

For example, people in Japan and America work at different times.
(たとえば、日本とアメリカの人は違う時間に働いています)

Without time zones, it would be hard to...
(もし時差がなかったら、～するのが難しくなるでしょう)

I would feel confused if...
(もし～だったら、私は混乱すると思います)

Life would be easier/harder because...
(生活はもっと簡単／難しくなると思います。なぜなら…)

Time zones make the world more organized.
(時差は世界をより整理されたものにしてくれます)

A stylized illustration of a blue house with a yellow door and windows. The house has a grey roof and a chimney on the right side. Several white circles with smiling faces are floating around the house, suggesting a happy or positive atmosphere.

Questions:

1. Do you think having time zones is useful?
2. How would your life change if the whole world used the same time?
3. How do time zones help people in modern life (like in business or online meetings)?