

Time as marked by the bells

The use of the bells to mark the time stems from the period when seamen (1) could not afford a personal time piece (i.e. - a watch) and (2) even if they could, they had no idea on how to tell time with such an instrument. The bells mark the [hours of the watch](#) in half-hour increments. The seamen would know if it were morning, noon, or night. Each watch* is four hours long and the bells are struck thus:

Mid	Morning	Forenoon	Afternoon	Dogs*	First
0030 - 1 bell	0430 - 1 bell	0830 - 1 bell	1230 - 1 bell	1630 - 1 bell	2030 - 1 bell
0100 - 2 bells	0500 - 2 bells	0900 - 2 bells	1300 - 2 bells	1700 - 2 bells	2100 - 2 bells
0130 - 3 bells	0530 - 3 bells	0930 - 3 bells	1330 - 3 bells	1730 - 3 bells	2130 - 3 bells
0200 - 4 bells	0600 - 4 bells	1000 - 4 bells	1400 - 4 bells	1800 - 4 bells	2200 - 4 bells
0230 - 5 bells	0630 - 5 bells	1030 - 5 bells	1430 - 5 bells	1830 - 5 bells	2230 - 5 bells
0300 - 6 bells	0700 - 6 bells	1100 - 6 bells	1500 - 6 bells	1900 - 6 bells	2300 - 6 bells
0330 - 7 bells	0730 - 7 bells	1130 - 7 bells	1530 - 7 bells	1930 - 7 bells	2330 - 7 bells
0400 - 8 bells**	0800 - 8 bells	1200 - 8 bells	1600 - 8 bells	2000 - 8 bells	2400 - 8 bells

Notes: * - The period from 1600 to 2000 is split into two dog watches. These watches run from 1600 to 1800 and from 1800 to 2000. This alternates the daily watch routine so Sailors on the mid-watch would not have it the second night, and, the split also gives each watchstander the opportunity to eat the evening meal.

** - The end of the watch is considered at 8 bells, hence the saying "Eight Bells and All Is Well."