Talking about time

The noun **time** is countable in expressions like *a long time, a short time* and *quite a time*.

They took **a long time** to finish the job.  
We have been hearing about this for **quite a time**.

**Time** is generally uncountable when we talk about the ‘time’ (number of hours, days etc.) needed to complete something.

He took **quite some time** to give a reply.

The expression ‘the time’ means ‘enough time’. Note that **the** is often dropped in an informal style.

Just come with me – I don’t have **(the) time** to explain.  
**Clock times**

When we talk about clock times, time is countable. The countable time can be used with the indefinite articles **a/an**. It can also have plural forms.

Two o’ clock would be **a great time** to start. (NOT Two o’clock would be great time to start.)

She called me at **various times** yesterday. (NOT She called me at various time yesterday.)

**Without prepositions**

In some common expressions **time** is often used without a preposition.

Can you come **another time**? (More natural than ‘Can you come at another time?’)  
**What time** does the bus leave? (More natural than ‘At what time does the bus leave?’)  
You can’t beat me **this time**.

**On time and in time**

**On time** means at the planned time. When you are on time you are neither late nor early.

None of the trains arrived **on time**.  
We want the meeting to start exactly **on time**.

The opposite of **on time** is early or late.

**In time** means ‘before the last moment’. It’s opposite is ‘too late’.

He would have died if he hadn’t been taken to hospital **in time**. (He was taken to hospital before it was too late. So he survived.)