

## Why are we so obsessed with telling the time

With the emergence of mechanical clocks in the 1300s, the time was increasingly displayed in public spaces, providing a **focal** point for the organization of social life. But the 18th century witnessed an explosion in the **manufacture** of a different, more personalized device — the watch.

focal 焦点的

manufacture 制造；生产

Henceforth, time was **portable** and wealthy individuals could adjust their own personal watches to public clocks, bringing home a more accurate knowledge of the time. The habit of clock-watching had emerged.

portable 便携的

During the 19th century, however, this practice turned into a **veritable** obsession. A number of factors **stimulated** this phenomenon, among which were the development of industry and new means of transport and communication. Railway timetables, time-stamped telegrams and factory **discipline** all called for stricter **conformity** to the time of the clock.

veritable 真正的

stimulate 刺激；激励

discipline 学科；纪律；训练

conformity 遵守；一致

By the turn of the 20th century, **punctuality** had become the **hallmark** of modern society. Resistance to the **imposition** of standard clock time, whether in rural communities or Western colonies, was considered a sign of **backwardness**, and "keeping up" with time had become a new source of anxiety.

punctuality 守时

hallmark 特点

imposition 征收；强加

backwardness 落后；迟疑

In 1881, the American neurologist George Beard listed "clocks and watches" among the causes of what he described as an epidemic of "nervousness": "They compel us to be on time",

he wrote, "and excite the habit of looking to see the exact moment, so as not to be late for trains or appointments."