

For centuries, sundials and water clocks
inaccurately told us all we needed to know about time.
Mechanical clocks started appearing on towers in
Italy in the 14th century, but their timekeeping
was less impressive than their looks, wandering up to 15 minutes a day.
By the 17th century some geniuses, including Galileo and Pascal,
had theorized about, but failed to build, better timepieces. Then, in
1656, Dutch astronomer Christian Huygens constructed the first pendulum clock,
revolutionizing timekeeping. The precision of Huygens' clock allowed scientists
to use it for their physics experiments, and shopkeepers to open and close at
fixed hours. In 1761, Englishman John Harrison perfected a clock that worked at
sea and put accurate time in a navigator's pocket.