

Date and Time Patterns

Date and time formats are specified by *date and time pattern* strings. Within date and time pattern strings, unquoted letters from 'A' to 'Z' and from 'a' to 'z' are interpreted as pattern letters representing the components of a date or time string. Text can be quoted using single quotes (') to avoid interpretation. "' ' " represents a single quote. All other characters are not interpreted; they're simply copied into the output string during formatting or matched against the input string during parsing.

The following pattern letters are defined (all other characters from 'A' to 'Z' and from 'a' to 'z' are reserved):

Letter	Date or Time Component	Presentation	Examples
G	Era designator	Text	AD
y	Year	Year	1996; 96
Y	Week year	Year	2009; 09
M	Month in year	Month	July; Jul; 07
w	Week in year	Number	27
W	Week in month	Number	2
D	Day in year	Number	189
d	Day in month	Number	10
F	Day of week in month	Number	2
E	Day name in week	Text	Tuesday; Tue
u	Day number of week (1 = Monday, ..., 7 = Sunday)	Number	1
a	Am/pm marker	Text	PM
H	Hour in day (0-23)	Number	0
k	Hour in day (1-24)	Number	24
K	Hour in am/pm (0-11)	Number	0
h	Hour in am/pm (1-12)	Number	12
m	Minute in hour	Number	30
s	Second in minute	Number	55
S	Millisecond	Number	978
Z	Time zone	General time zone	Pacific Standard Time; PST; GMT-08:00
Z	Time zone	RFC 822 time zone	-0800
X	Time zone	ISO 8601 time zone	-08; -0800; -08:00

Pattern letters are usually repeated, as their number determines the exact presentation:

- **Text:** For formatting, if the number of pattern letters is 4 or more, the full form is used; otherwise a short or abbreviated form is used if available. For parsing, both forms are accepted, independent of the number of pattern letters.
- **Number:** For formatting, the number of pattern letters is the minimum number of digits, and shorter numbers are zero-padded to this amount. For parsing, the number of pattern letters is ignored unless it's needed to separate two adjacent fields.
- **Year:** If the formatter's `Calendar` is the Gregorian calendar, the following rules are applied.
 - For formatting, if the number of pattern letters is 2, the year is truncated to 2 digits; otherwise it is interpreted as a `number`.
 - For parsing, if the number of pattern letters is more than 2, the year is interpreted literally, regardless of the number of digits. So using the pattern "MM/dd/yyyy", "01/11/12" parses to Jan 11, 12 A.D.

- For parsing with the abbreviated year pattern ("y" or "yy"), `SimpleDateFormat` must interpret the abbreviated year relative to some century. It does this by adjusting dates to be within 80 years before and 20 years after the time the `SimpleDateFormat` instance is created. For example, using a pattern of "MM/dd/yy" and a `SimpleDateFormat` instance created on Jan 1, 1997, the string "01/11/12" would be interpreted as Jan 11, 2012 while the string "05/04/64" would be interpreted as May 4, 1964. During parsing, only strings consisting of exactly two digits, as defined by `Character.isDigit(char)`, will be parsed into the default century. Any other numeric string, such as a one digit string, a three or more digit string, or a two digit string that isn't all digits (for example, "-1"), is interpreted literally. So "01/02/3" or "01/02/003" are parsed, using the same pattern, as Jan 2, 3 AD. Likewise, "01/02/-3" is parsed as Jan 2, 4 BC.

Otherwise, calendar system specific forms are applied. For both formatting and parsing, if the number of pattern letters is 4 or more, a calendar specific **long form** is used. Otherwise, a calendar specific **short or abbreviated form** is used.

If week year 'Y' is specified and the `calendar` doesn't support any **week years**, the calendar year ('y') is used instead. The support of week years can be tested with a call to `getCalendar().isWeekDateSupported()`.

- **Month:** If the number of pattern letters is 3 or more, the month is interpreted as **text**; otherwise, it is interpreted as a **number**.

Examples

The following examples show how date and time patterns are interpreted in the U.S. locale. The given date and time are 2001-07-04 12:08:56 local time in the U.S. Pacific Time time zone.

Date and Time Pattern	Result
"yyyy.MM.dd G 'at' HH:mm:ss z"	2001.07.04 AD at 12:08:56 PDT
"EEE, MMM d, 'yy"	Wed, Jul 4, '01
"h:mm a"	12:08 PM
"hh 'o''clock' a, zzzz"	12 o'clock PM, Pacific Daylight Time
"K:mm a, z"	0:08 PM, PDT
"yyyyy.MMMMM.dd GGG hh:mm aaa"	02001.July.04 AD 12:08 PM
"EEE, d MMM yyyy HH:mm:ss Z"	Wed, 4 Jul 2001 12:08:56 -0700
"yyMMddHHmmssZ"	010704120856-0700
"yyyy-MM-dd'T'HH:mm:ss.SSSZ"	2001-07-04T12:08:56.235-0700
"yyyy-MM-dd'T'HH:mm:ss.SSSXXX"	2001-07-04T12:08:56.235-07:00
"YYYY-'W'ww-u"	2001-W27-3