

New Year

The New Year begins at midnight when 31st December ends and 1st January begins. It is often seen as a momentous occasion where people say goodbye to the past year and welcome in the new year.

But how did this changing of the year come about and how is it celebrated?

The Gregorian Calendar

The calendar was changed in October 1582 by Pope Gregory XIII, hence the name. Before this calendar was introduced, the Julian Calendar was used. The Pope made these changes so that Easter could be celebrated at the time of year it used to be celebrated by the early Church years before.

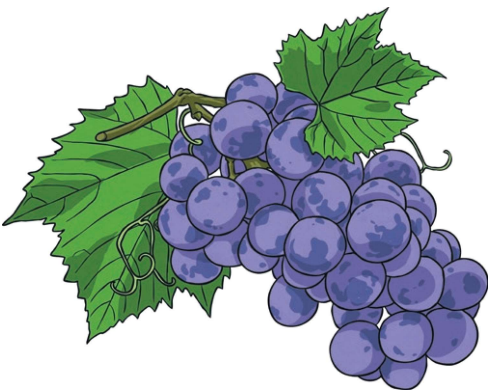
1st January is recognised as the day to commemorate the saints. Other countries and religions celebrate the start of the New Year on different days of the year.

New Year's Eve is also known as Old Year's Day or Saint Sylvester's Day.

New Year in Mexico

Mexicans celebrate the New Year by eating a grape with each of the 12 chimes of midnight, whilst making a wish with each chime. Their homes are decorated red, yellow, green and white to symbolise hopes for the coming year.

Mexican sweetbread is baked with a charm or a coin inside. The recipient of the coin or charm is said to be blessed with good luck.



Another tradition is to write down all the bad or unhappy things that happened to you during the year, and then throw the list into the fire. This symbolises the removal of all negative energy.

Due to the time differences around the world, the first country to welcome in the New Year is Kiribati, which is located in the Line Islands in the Pacific Ocean.



New Year in the United States

In the USA, it has become a tradition to watch the famous New Year Ball Drop in Times Square, New York. This tradition has been held since 1907 and is now replicated in other countries.



Central Park, also in New York, hosts a Midnight Run, which ends with a huge firework display.

New Year in Europe

In Europe, most people celebrate New Year with friends and family, throwing parties or going to pubs and bars. Often fireworks, games and a special meal are part of the celebrations too.

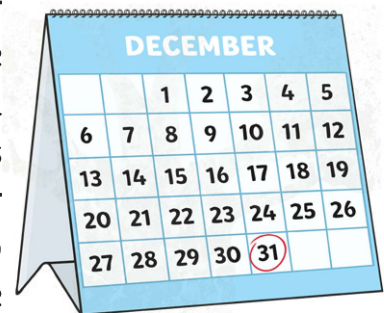
New Year in Scotland

In Scotland, New Year's Eve is called Hogmanay. People visit one another's houses and take gifts, traditionally a coin, bread, salt, coal and whisky. These represent prosperity, food, flavour, warmth and good cheer. In the Scottish capital, Edinburgh, the celebration is focused on a major street party along Princes Street. The cannon is fired at Edinburgh Castle at the stroke of midnight, followed by a large fireworks display.

In Brazil, New Year marks the beginning of the summer holidays. There are live concerts, a spectacular fireworks display and millions of revellers on Rio de Janeiro's beach, Copacabana.

A Time to Reflect

New Year is seen as a time to reflect on the past year and look forward to the new one. It is often a time when people make New Year Resolutions, which give people the chance to resolve to make changes in their lives. Adults might decide to change their jobs or move house, and children might resolve to do their homework, help more around the house or join a club.



Questions

1. Why is the calendar known as the Gregorian calendar?

2. Which country welcomes the New Year first? Tick **one**.

- Brazil
- Kiribati
- The United States of America
- Mexico

3. Give another name that is used for New Year's Eve.

4. Explain one of the traditions that Mexicans may carry out at New Year and give the reason.

5. 'The recipient of the coin or charm is said to be blessed with good luck.'
What does the word 'recipient' mean in this sentence?

6. Match the country to the New Year celebration.

Brazil

Scotland

Mexico

Sweetbread is baked with a coin or charm inside.

Millions of revellers go to the beach.

People visit other people's houses with gifts, such as a coin, bread, salt, coal and whisky.

7. Why do you think fireworks have become popular to use in New Year's celebrations?

8. Why do you think people choose to make New Year's Resolutions?
