

Warmer

New Year is an exciting time and many cultures celebrate it in a special way. This may include special foods and drinks, parties, religious festivals and other traditions. Answer these questions in pairs or small groups:

1. How is New Year celebrated in your country?
2. How do you and your family celebrate New Year?
3. Do you know of any countries that celebrate New Year in the same way? Do you know of any countries that celebrate it differently?

Activity 1: The history of New Year celebrations

Visit www.history.com/topics/new-years and read the sections entitled 'Early New Year's celebrations' and 'January 1 becomes New Year's Day'. Look for the answers to these questions:

1. When were the earliest New Year celebrations and where did they take place?
2. What name was given to the religious festival and where did the name come from?
3. How long did the original celebration last?
4. When people began to develop their own calendars, to what events did they tie the beginning of a new year?
5. What event marked the beginning of the New Year in Egypt?
6. How long was the first Roman calendar?
7. Who added the first two months of the year to the calendar and what were the names of the first two months?
8. Who introduced 1 January as the start of the New Year?
9. What changes did Christian leaders make in the Middle Ages?
10. When was 1 January reintroduced as the beginning of the calendar year?

When you've finished, discuss what you found out with your partner.

Activity 2: New Year's traditions

On the same webpage (www.history.com/topics/new-years), read the final section entitled 'New Year's traditions'. Answer the following questions and, then, compare your answers with your partner.

1. What do Spanish people eat 12 of just before midnight on New Year's Eve and what do they symbolize?
2. Which countries eat legumes and what do they represent?
3. What do pigs represent in some cultures and where is pork eaten?
4. Which countries eat ring-shaped cakes and why?
5. What is hidden inside the rice pudding eaten in Sweden and Norway on New Year's Eve? What will happen to the person who finds it?

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6. Which people first made New Year's resolutions?
7. What did they promise to do?
8. What's the most famous symbol of the beginning of the New Year in the US?
9. How long has the event taken place?
10. What alternative objects are dropped in other American cities?

Activity 3: New Year celebrations around the world

New Year is celebrated on different dates in different places and often involves very different traditions. In this activity, you and a partner will find out all about two countries and their New Year celebrations.

Student A – Scottish New Year

Before you look at the weblink, decide whether the following statements are true (T) or false (F):

1. 'Hogmanay' means 'the first day of the year'.
2. Scottish people used to celebrate Hogmanay more than Christmas.
3. Strangers are not allowed inside people's houses during Hogmanay.
4. It is considered unlucky to enter a household without any gifts.
5. A lump of coal is a traditional gift.

Now, visit www.scotland.org/features/hogmanay-top-facts/ to check your answers.

Student B – Jewish New Year

Before you look at the weblink, decide whether the following statements are true (T) or false (F):

1. Jewish New Year is a celebration of the creation of the world.
2. The celebration lasts a whole week.
3. Jews believe that God will decide what the next year will be like for someone.
4. A special song called the 'Shofar' is sung in the synagogue.
5. A round loaf is eaten to symbolize the circle of life.

Now, visit [www.bbc.co.uk/schools/religion/judaism/rosh hashanah.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/religion/judaism/rosh_hashanah.shtml) to check your answers.

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Compare your answers with your partner. Then, together, fill in the table below using the information on the websites:

	Scottish New Year	Jewish New Year
name of celebration		
customs		
food and drink		

Activity 4: Quiz: International New Year's Eve customs

Use the following website to access a quiz on New Year's Eve customs around the world. In pairs, discuss each question and decide which option you think is correct. To reveal the answers, click on 'Answer' at the end of each question.

www.topics-mag.com/internatl/holidays/new-year/quiz/new-years.htm

Post-quiz discussion

How many of the customs are also practised in your own country?

Activity 5: Round-up task

Imagine that you have friends from another country coming to celebrate New Year with you and your family. In pairs, plan the evening, considering the following points:

- What kind of food are you going to serve?
- Which local traditions are you going to show them?
- Will you visit any special people or places?
- What are you going to do at midnight?
- Will you make any resolutions?

When you have finished, compare the plans you have made with another pair.

Optional activity

Make your own list of New Year's resolutions. Compare your list with your classmates' to see if any of your resolutions are similar.

We wish you a Happy New Year!