

Webquest: New Year

by Gabrielle Jones

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 and traditions

Visit wilstar.com/holidays/newyear.htm. Read up until the end of the paragraph 'New Years Food'. Look for the answers to these questions:

1. When and where did the festival of New Year start?
2. At what time of the year were the original New Year celebrations?
3. How long did the original celebration last?
4. Who introduced 1st January as the start of the New Year?
5. What Christian festivals were also celebrated at New Year?
6. What is a 'first footer'?
7. What should you avoid doing at New Year?
8. What do people in coastal areas often do at New Year?
9. What is the name of the song played in many English speaking countries at New Year?
10. What is the name of the football fixture common in America on New Year's Day?

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

Activity 2: New Year's traditions around the world

On the same webpage (wilstar.com/holidays/newyear.htm), read the article from 'New Years France' onwards. Answer the following questions, and then compare your answers with your partner.

1. What drink do people in France have to celebrate New Year?
2. What food is it considered bad luck to eat at New Year in the Phillipines?
3. What type of games do people in Greece play to celebrate New Year's Day?
4. How many grapes do people in Spain eat at midnight on New Year's Eve?
5. Why do people sometimes swim in cold water at New Year?
6. At what time is 'Auld Lang Syne' traditionally sung?
7. When was 'Auld Lang Syne' first published?
8. What does 'Auld Lang Syne' mean?

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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 the Scottish and the Jewish 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 to check your answers.

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		

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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/international/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!