

# WHEN SHOULD THE NEW YEAR BEGIN?

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We take it for granted that January 1st is the start of a new year, but this was not the case for most of history. Stretch your ability to think from multiple perspectives by discussing the various dates people have celebrated the new year.

## The Beginning of January

“January” came into existence with Julius Caesar’s Julian Calendar of 45 BC. January, named for the Roman god *Janus*, was the first month and its first day marked the new year.

The Julian calendar gave way to the Gregorian calendar in 1582, now considered the international standard. However, this standardization didn’t officially set January 1st a new year celebration.

December 25 and March 25 competed for the honor in many countries due to Christianity’s rise: December 25th marks Jesus’ birth while March 25 represents the day the angel Gabriel visited Mary.

This new year’s confusion continued until very recently. In fact, the new year in all British territories was officially March 25th **until 1750!**

Here’s a **table** showing how long it took for January 1st to become standard across Europe.

Country	Start numbered year on 1 January	Adoption of Gregorian calendar
Denmark	Gradual change from 13th to 16th centuries <sup>[39]</sup>	1700
Venice	1522	1582
Holy Roman Empire (Catholic states)	1544	1583
Spain	1556	1582
Portugal	1556	1582
Holy Roman Empire (Protestant states)	1559	1700
Sweden	1559	1753
France	1564 <sup>[40]</sup>	1582
Southern Netherlands	1576 <sup>[41]</sup>	1582
Lorraine	1579	1682
Dutch Republic	1583	1582
Scotland	1600 <sup>[42]</sup> <sup>[43]</sup>	1752
Russia	1700 <sup>[44]</sup>	1918
Tuscany	1721	1750
Britain and British Empire except Scotland	1752 <sup>[42]</sup>	1752

# The New Year on Other Calendars

Naturally, calendars that don't even have a *January* cannot celebrate the new year on January 1st. Here are the dates of new year celebrations based on non-Gregorian calendars.

The Iranian New Year, or **Nowruz**, occurs around the 21st of March on the Gregorian Calendar. It is tracked using the **Solar Hijri calendar**. This new year date is celebrated by many other countries in the area.

**Rosh Hashanah** is the Jewish New Year, and its date falls between September or early October.

The French used a **special calendar** for 12 years following the French Revolution. It placed new years near our September 23.

The **Islamic New Year** comes about eleven days earlier each year on the Gregorian calendar. In 2008, it occurred in late December, but in 2013 it will fall in early November.

And the **Lunar New Year**, celebrated throughout Asia, occurs somewhere between January 21st and February 21st.

## What Would You Do? Activity

Consider what day of the year would make most sense to celebrate a new year. Ignore the conventions of the Gregorian calendar. Great possibilities include:

- the end of winter
- the longest day of summer
- the date of the fall harvest
- a special historical event

## Steps:

1. Decide what is most important about a new year. Is it purely lunar, involving the Earth's trip around the sun? Or is there something to a new year and a fresh start? Is there something else? Are various factors connected? **\*\*In your R/W notebook, make a list of criteria for what a new year should be; then, circle the most important factors.**
2. Next, brainstorm possibilities for a new date. Write down all ideas. Judge your ideas based on the criteria set in step one.
3. Create a Twitter feed that introduces the new date. Remember, tweets can only have 140 characters. Your job here is to both **share and sell!**
4. Finally, transfer your tweet to the Twitter page for display. Write large enough to be seen easily. Use a marker for this.

