

Lesson Plan: New Year's Day



AMERICAN
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ENGLISH

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New Year's Day

[1] In the U.S., New Year's Day is celebrated on January 1st. It celebrates the end of one year and beginning of a new year. The day before New Year's Day is called New Year's Eve. New Year's Eve is December 31st, and people often hold special parties to celebrate this special time. At these parties, people stay awake until midnight when the first day of the new year officially begins.

[2] New York City has a special celebration in an area called Times Square. About 500,000 people attend this celebration every year, which includes special performances by celebrities and fireworks in the sky at midnight. The celebration is also watched live on television or apps by millions of other people.

[3] One minute before midnight a countdown begins and a lighted ball on top of a tall building slowly moves down a pole. People count down the final seconds of the year, and the ball reaches the bottom of the pole at midnight. Everyone cheers and wishes each other "Happy New Year!" Confetti and balloons are released, and people use noisemakers. Some people hug or kiss and a song called "Auld Lang Syne" is often played.

[4] Although the lighted ball is unique to New York City, there are parties around the U.S. that follow similar New Year's Eve traditions. Children are often

allowed to stay up late on New Year's Eve to count down the end of the year and celebrate the beginning of the new year. Another tradition is offering a New Year's toast, a short public speech at a party or event, to wish others health, happiness, or good fortune in the new year.

[5] New Year's Day on January 1st is an official holiday in the United States. Many businesses and government buildings are closed. Some people have New Year's Day parties, but they are usually more informal and relaxed than New Year's Eve parties. On New Year's Day, many friends and family watch special parades and college football games together. The oldest of these special college football games is called the Rose Bowl. The first Rose Bowl was played in 1902.

[6] Another New Year's Day tradition is making resolutions, or special promises or goals, for the new year. Many people's goals include ways to improve themselves or make their lives better. Saving money, eating healthier food, exercising, or spending more time with family or friends are typical resolutions.

[7] Although the time and traditions are different, celebrating the new year is a common holiday in many places. When do you celebrate the new year, and what do you do to celebrate? Like many U.S. holidays, New Year's Day celebrates both traditions and new beginnings – values shared by many people around the world.



Overview

In this 90-minute lesson, students learn about how New Year's Eve and New Year's Day are celebrated in the US. Students identify and practice language used to discuss these celebrations, prepare an impromptu speech, and reflect on the past year.

Goals

Students will:

- Practice reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills.
- Learn about New Year's Eve and New Year's Day celebrations in the U.S.
- Make connections between their own lives and how the new year is celebrated in the United States.
- Strengthen collaboration, communication, creativity, and critical thinking skills on the topics of reflection and goal setting.

Lesson Materials

1. Printed or projected copy of the photo at the beginning of this lesson.
2. Printed or projected copies of the New Year's Day reading included with this lesson.
3. Printed or projected copies of the Matching Q&A worksheet included with this lesson.
4. Printed or projected copies of the Impromptu Speech worksheet included with this lesson.
5. Poster paper, sticky notes, and pens or pencils.

Preparation

1. Read through this lesson in its entirety.
2. Review the **New Year's Day** reading and the **Vocabulary from the Reading** list below.
3. Think about local traditions around new beginnings. Decide if you would like to connect the U.S. holiday of New Year's Day with these local traditions.
4. Determine whether you will need to activate students' prior knowledge, pre-teach, or otherwise provide scaffolding, or support, for your students beyond the suggestions in the Procedures section.
5. Consider if, or how, you will adapt or change this lesson to better meet your students' needs.



Vocabulary from the Reading

- **confetti** (noun) – Small pieces of paper that you throw during a celebration.
- **countdown** (noun) – The time just before an important event when people are counting the time backwards until it happens.
- **fireworks** (plural noun) – Small explosions that produce a loud noise and bright colors used to celebrate special events.
- **midnight** (noun) – 12 o'clock at night.
- **noisemakers** (plural noun) – An object, like a horn or rattle, used to make noise at a party.
- **resolutions** (plural noun) – Promises to yourself to do something; a type of goal.
- **toast** (noun) – A short public speech at a party or event, to wish others health, happiness, or good future.
- **traditions** (plural noun) – Beliefs, stories, and actions that have been part of the culture of a group for a long time.
- **wish** (verb) – To express hope for another person's success or happiness on a special occasion.

Procedures

Introduction and Collaboration Activity: Before and After (10 minutes)

1. Show students the photo at the beginning of this lesson.
2. Ask students to work with a partner to answer these questions:
 - What happened before this photo was taken?
 - What happened after this photo was taken?
 - Why do you think someone took this photo?
 - What do you think the photographer felt when taking this photo?
3. Bring the whole class back together and ask for a few volunteers to share their answers.

Reading Activity: Matching Q&A (15 minutes)

1. Give students copies of the New Year's Day reading or display it for all students to read.
2. Give students time to read the article. Then, ask them to complete the Matching Q&A worksheet.
3. Bring students together to check their answers. (See answer key below.)

Answer Key

1. B
2. C
3. D
4. E
5. F
6. A

Communication Activity: Impromptu Speech (25 minutes)

1. Remind students that at New Year's Eve events or parties, people offer toasts or speeches to wish others health and happiness in the new year. While these speeches may be planned, they are often improvised.
2. Pass out copies of the Impromptu Speech handout or display it for the whole class.
3. Demonstrate a speech or toast using the PREP model (see examples below).
4. Put students into small groups and ask them to use the PREP model to create a speech or New Year's toast.
5. Ask each group to choose one person to speak. Other group members should help the speaker practice.
6. After one person from each group gives a speech for the class, the class votes for the best speech.

Example Speech

P – Today, I want to talk about my goals.

R – In my opinion, the new year is a good time to set new goals.

E – Last year, I decided to join English Club. I learned things about other cultures, learned a lot of new words in English, and made new friends.

P – That's why I believe my goals are important. This year I want to keep learning and help others, too.

Example Toast

P – Let me tell you about how lucky I am to have such wonderful friends and family.

R – The reason I say this is because each of you have helped me or shown me some kindness this year.

E – For example, when I was worried about my exams, you helped me review materials and quizzed me on important information



P – That’s why I want to I wish you all happiness and success in the coming year.
Happy New Year, everyone!

Critical Thinking Activity: Memory Lane (20 minutes)

1. Tape cards or poster paper around the room with reflective prompts. (See examples below.)
 - Something I learned last year
 - A challenge I overcame
 - A happy memory
 - Something I’m proud of
 - A person who helped me
2. Tell students to walk around the room, read each prompt, and write short answers on sticky notes and place them near the prompt (or on the poster paper).
3. After everyone is finished, encourage students to walk around again and read others’ reflections.

Creativity, Listening, and Writing Activity: New Year’s Facts (20 minutes)

1. Prepare a series of true and false sentences from the lesson reading or use the examples below.
 - People watch the ball drop in Times Square. (T)
 - People eat grapes at midnight. (F)
 - Many people make resolutions. (T)
 - Everyone goes to bed early on New Year’s Eve. (F)
 - Fireworks light up the sky at midnight. (T)
 - Some people go to parties. (T)
 - All stores and government offices are open on New Year’s Day. (F)
2. Tell students to listen as you read each sentence. If they hear a sentence that is true for New Year’s celebrations in the United States, they should stand up and shout “Happy New Year!” If they hear a sentence that is false, they should stay seated.
3. Read each sentence and remind students to listen carefully and respond quickly. Keep score or just play for fun.
4. After the game, ask students which sentences were false. Write these sentences on the board or display them for the class.
5. Ask students to rewrite the false sentences to make them true.
6. Put students in pairs and ask them to write true and false statements about new year celebrations in their communities.
7. Collect the sentences and play the game again with the students’ sentences.

Closing Activity: Countdown (10 Minutes)

1. Ask students to write 3 things they learned during this lesson.
2. Ask students to write 2 things they want to know more about.
3. Ask students to write 1 question they have about something from this lesson.
4. You can collect students' answers as an exit ticket or ask students to verbally share their responses.

Variations and Extensions

Critical Thinking Variation Activity: One-Word Goals

Students may complete this activity instead of the Memory Lane activity.

1. Put students in pairs or small groups and ask them to discuss these questions:
 - What are some things you did last year that made you happy?
 - What was something new you tried?
 - What was a challenge you had?
2. Give students time to write their answers to these questions:
 - Last year, I felt proud when I...
 - One thing I learned last year was...
 - Something I want to do better this year is...
3. Tell students to think about their answers and choose one word to guide their new year. Ask students to complete the sentence below.
 - My word for the year is... because...
 - Example: My word for the year is courage because I want to try new things and not be afraid.
4. If there is time, students can share their goals with others.

Critical Thinking and Writing Extension: Writing SMART Goals

Students may complete this activity as an extension to the Memory Lane activity.

1. Tell students that they are going to work to create SMART goals. SMART goals are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound.
2. Ask students to think about their reflections from the Memory Lane activity and write a specific goal. Being specific helps students clearly understand what they are working toward. A goal that is too vague, like “do better in school,” is hard to follow.
 - Specific prompt: Look at your reflection. What do you want to achieve this year?
 - Specific example: I want to improve my writing skills so I can express my ideas more clearly.



3. Guide students through the process of measuring work to achieve their goals. Measuring progress helps students see how far they've come and stay motivated.
 - Measurable prompt: How will you know you're making progress?
 - Measurable example: I will write one journal entry per week and get feedback from my teacher.
4. Check with students to make sure their goal is achievable. Goals should challenge students but still be possible. If a goal is too difficult, it can be frustrating for students. Choosing something realistic helps students stay engaged.
 - Achievable prompt: Is this goal realistic for you right now?
 - Achievable example: Yes, I have time to write once a week and my teacher is available to help.
5. Remind students that their goal should be relevant. Goals should matter to each student. When goals connect with their interests or values, students are more likely to stick with them.
 - Relevant prompt: Why is this goal important to you?
 - Relevant example: Writing helps me share my thoughts, and I want to do better in English class.
6. Make sure students have goals that are time-bound. Having a deadline helps students make plans, take actions, and stay on track.
 - Time-bound prompt: When will you reach this goal?
 - Time-bound example: By the end of the semester, I will have written 12 journal entries.
7. Check back with students over the course of the semester to see if they are making progress toward their goals. If necessary, help students make changes to their SMART goals to ensure they can reach them.

Matching Q&A

Draw a line from the question to the correct answer.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. What holiday is celebrated on January 1st in the United States? | A. Saving money, eating healthier food, exercising |
| 2. What do people do at New Year's Eve parties? | B. New Year's Day |
| 3. What is the purpose of a New Year's toast? | C. Participate in countdowns, sing, dance, make toasts |
| 4. What do people do at New Year's Day parties? | D. To wish others health, happiness, and good fortune in the new year |
| 5. What are resolutions? | E. Watch special parades and college football games with friends and family |
| 6. What are some typical New Year's resolutions? | F. Special promises or goals for the new year |

Impromptu Speech

Sometimes you may be asked to speak with little or no time to prepare. This is called an impromptu speech. It can feel scary, even for people who often speak in public. The PREP model can help you practice impromptu speaking. This will help you improve your speaking skills, feel more confident, and speak better in surprise situations.

P - Point

- Today, I want to talk about...
- One thing I think is important is...
- Let me tell you about...

R - Reason

- The reason I say this is...
- ... is important because...
- In my opinion...

E - Example

- For example...
- This reminds me of...
- From what I've seen...

P - Point (again)

- So, that's why I think...
- That's why I believe...
- That's why I'm here to say...

Work with your group to write an impromptu speech. Use the PREP model to help you.

P –

R –

E –

P –