



A Lesson on English



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New Year's Eve in the USA

by Sara Tusek

New Year's Eve is on December 31, the final day of the Gregorian year, and the day before New Year's Day. New Year's Eve is a separate observance from the observance of New Year's Day.

CELEBRATING IN PUBLIC

Compared with nations in Europe, South America and other parts of the world, Americans have relatively few major public holidays. Christmas, Thanksgiving, Easter, and most other holidays are celebrated at home, within family and friendship circles.

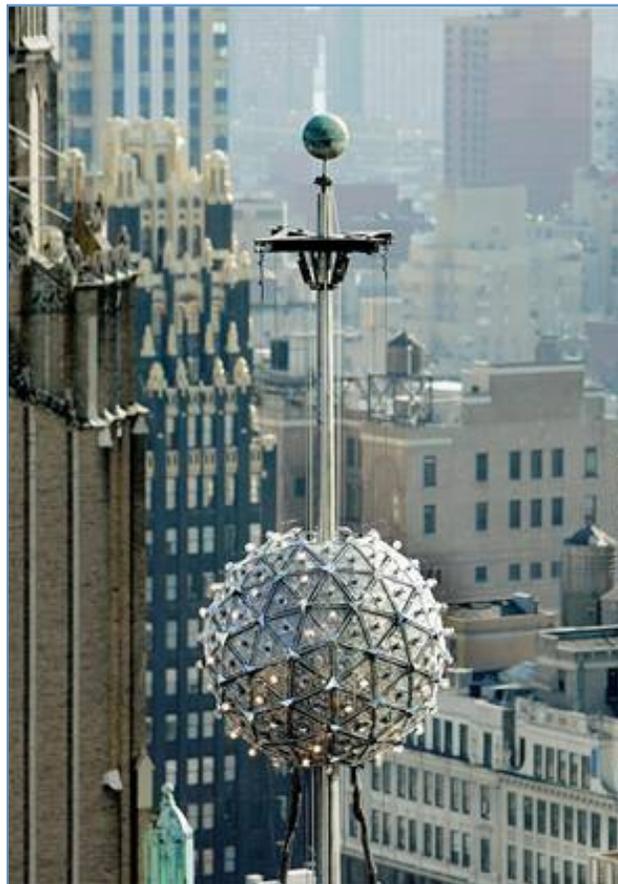
New Year's Eve, however (like the Fourth of July), is a public holiday. In most parts of the United States, New Year's Eve is celebrated with parties and social gatherings spanning the transition of the year at midnight. Restaurants, theme parks and hotels host lavish parties, often complete with champagne and a food buffet at midnight.

THE BIG APPLE

One of the top destination

cities for New Year's Eve traditionally has been New York. The ball falling pole in Times Square, to the chant of hundreds of thousand voices counting down ("3, 2, 1!!!") is televised every year, with millions of people watching and cheering at home.

In the past 100 years the "ball dropping" on top of One Times Square in New York City, broadcast to all of America (and rebroadcast in many other countries), is a major component of the New Year celebration.



The 11,875-pound (5,386 kg), 12-foot (3.7 m) diameter Waterford crystal ball located high above Times Square is lowered, starting at 11:59:00pm and reaching the bottom of its tower 60 seconds later, at the stroke of midnight (12:00:00 am).

From 1981 to 1988, New York City dropped an enlarged apple in recognition of its nickname. It is sometimes referred to as "the big apple" like the city itself; the custom derives from the time signal that used to be given at noon in harbors.

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"A Lesson on English" is a series of short lessons created for people who want to become fluent in conversational English. The lessons are practical and useful for students who have learned English in a traditional classroom setting or on their own.

Most of the information in this article is from wikipedia.com

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FROM THE MORAVIANS TO AMERICAN BLACKS

Many religious communities have a tradition of New Year's Eve being known as "Watch Night." The faithful of the community congregate in worship services commencing New Year's Eve night and continuing past midnight into the new year. The Watch Night is a time for giving thanks for the blessings of the outgoing year and praying for divine favor during the upcoming year.

Though believed by some to have begun in the African American community, watch night can actually be traced back to a sect of Christians known as the Moravians who held the first Watchnight Service in Herrnhut, Saxony, in 1732. The practice was later adopted by John Wesley, the founder of Methodism.

Watch Night did take on special significance to African Americans on New Year's Eve 1862, however, as slaves eagerly awaited the arrival of January 1, 1863—the effective date of the Emancipation Proclamation. This particular New Year's Eve became known as "Freedom's Eve."

ALTERNATIVE CELEBRATIONS

With the custom of toasting with champagne at midnight, combined with perhaps hours of drinking before and after midnight, many people end up driving home in a state of intoxication on New Year's Eve. Policemen set up checkpoints to catch those "driving under the influence" (DUI) or "driving while intoxicated" (DWI). Stiff penalties and fines deter many people from taking a chance by driving under the influence; designated drivers in the group will refrain from alcohol, or people may skip drinking altogether and have a quiet night at home. Churches often hold worship services to welcome the New Year in a more sober way.

NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

Americans are famous for their efforts at self-improvement. Self-help books, exercise programs, diets, "quit-smoking" regimes: all of these are very common attempts to increase health, happiness and longevity.

New Year's Eve is the traditional time to take stock of the year that's passing and find ways to improve the year to come. Probably 1/3 of all Americans go on a diet on New Year's Day each year. Comedians poke fun at New Year's resolutions, but the truth is that many people stick with them and change their behavior. Here in Florida, the New Year might begin with a walk on the beach, watching the sun rise over the water, providing a good start to a New Year's resolution to get exercise every day.

The Atlantic Ocean, courtesy Robert Rhodin. A great place to make a New Year's resolution!

