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- [Main page](#)
- [Contents](#)
- [Featured content](#)
- [Current events](#)
- [Random article](#)
- [Donate to Wikipedia](#)

- Interaction
 - [Help](#)
 - [About Wikipedia](#)
 - [Community portal](#)
 - [Recent changes](#)
 - [Contact Wikipedia](#)

- Toolbox
- Print/export

- Languages
 - [العربية](#)
 - [Azərbaycanca](#)
 - [Bahasa Banjar](#)
 - [Български](#)
 - [Català](#)
 - [Česky](#)
 - [Dansk](#)
 - [Deutsch](#)
 - [Eesti](#)
 - [Ελληνικά](#)
 - [Español](#)
 - [Esperanto](#)
 - [Euskara](#)
 - [فارسی](#)
 - [Français](#)
 - [Galego](#)
 - [ગુજરાતી](#)
 - [한국어](#)
 - [हिन्दी](#)
 - [Hrvatski](#)
 - [Bahasa Indonesia](#)
 - [Íslenska](#)
 - [Italiano](#)
 - [עברית](#)
 - [Қазақша](#)
 - [Latina](#)
 - [Lëtzebuergesch](#)
 - [Lietuvių](#)
 - [Magyar](#)
 - [मराठी](#)
 - [Bahasa Melayu](#)
 - [Nederlands](#)
 - [日本語](#)
 - [Norsk \(bokmål\)](#)
 - [Norsk \(nynorsk\)](#)
 - [Polski](#)
 - [Português](#)
 - [Română](#)
 - [Русский](#)
 - [Scots](#)
 - [Shqip](#)
 - [Simple English](#)

Article [Talk](#)

[Read](#) [View source](#)

April Fools' Day

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This article is about the informal holiday. For other uses, see [April Fool's Day \(disambiguation\)](#) or [April Fool](#).

April Fools' Day is celebrated in different countries on April 1 every year. Sometimes referred to as **All Fools' Day**, April 1 is not a *national holiday*, but is widely recognized and celebrated as a day when people play practical jokes and **hoaxes** on each other.

In *France* and *Italy*, children and adults traditionally tack paper fish on each other's back as a trick and shout "april fish!" in their local language ("poisson d'avril" and "pesce d'aprile!" in *French* and *Italian* respectively).

The earliest recorded association between April 1 and foolishness can be found in *Chaucer's Canterbury Tales* (1392). Many writers suggest that the restoration of January 1 as *New Year's Day* in the 16th century was responsible for the creation of the holiday, but this theory does not explain earlier references.

Contents [hide]
1 Origins
2 Other prank days in the world
3 See also
4 References
5 External links

Origins

Precursors of April Fools' Day include the Roman festival of *Hilaria*, held March 25,^[1] and the Medieval *Feast of Fools*, held December 28,^[2] still a day on which pranks are played in Spanish-speaking countries.

In Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (1392), the "Nun's Priest's Tale" is set *Syn March bigan thritty dayes and two*.^[3] Modern scholars believe that there is a copying error in the extant manuscripts and that Chaucer actually wrote, *Syn March was gon*.^[4] Thus, the passage originally meant 32 days after April, i.e. May 2,^[5] the anniversary of the engagement of King *Richard II of England* to *Anne of Bohemia*, which took place in 1381. Readers apparently misunderstood this line to mean "March 32", i.e. April 1.^[6] In Chaucer's tale, the vain cock Chauntecleer is tricked by a fox.

In 1508, French poet *Eloy d'Amerval* referred to a *poisson d'avril* (April fool, literally "April fish"), a possible reference to the holiday.^[7] In 1539, Flemish poet Eduard de Dene wrote of a nobleman who sent his servants on foolish errands on April 1.^[5] In 1686, *John Aubrey* referred to the holiday as "Fooles holy day", the first British reference.^[5] On April 1, 1698, several people were tricked into going to the *Tower of London* to "see the Lions washed".^[5]

In the Middle Ages, New Year's Day was celebrated on March 25 in most European towns.^[8] In some areas of France, New Year's was a week-long holiday ending on April 1.^{[1][2]} Many writers suggest that April Fools originated because those who celebrated on January 1 made fun of those who celebrated on other dates.^[1] The use of January 1 as New Year's Day was common in France by the mid-16th century,^[5] and this date was adopted officially in 1564 by the *Edict of Roussillon*.

Other prank days in the world

Iranians play jokes on each other on the 13th day of the *Persian* new year (*Norouz*), which falls on April 1 or April 2. This day, celebrated as far back as 536 BC ^[9], is called *Sizdah Bedar* and is the oldest prank-tradition in the world still alive today; this fact has led many to believe that April Fools' Day has its origins in this tradition.^[10]

The April 1 tradition in France, *Romandy* and *French-speaking Canada* includes *poisson d'avril* (literally "April's fish"), attempting to attach a paper fish to the victim's back without being noticed. This is also widespread in other nations, such as Italy, where the term *Pesce d'aprile* (literally "April's fish") is also used to refer to any jokes done during the day. In Spanish-speaking countries, similar pranks are practiced on December 28, *día de los Santos Inocentes*, the "*Day of the Holy Innocents*". This custom also exists in certain areas of Belgium, including the province of *Antwerp*. The *Flemish* tradition is for children to lock out their parents or teachers, only letting them in if they promise to bring treats the same evening or the next day.

Under the *Joseon dynasty* of *Korea*, the royal family and courtiers were allowed to lie and fool each other, regardless of their hierarchy, on the first *snow* day of the year. They would stuff snow inside *bowls* and send it to the victim of the prank with fake excuses. The recipient of the snow was thought to be a loser in the game and had to grant a wish of the sender. Because pranks were not deliberately planned, they were harmless and were often done as *benevolence* towards royal servants.^[citation needed]

In Poland, *prima aprilis* ("April 1" in *Latin*) is a day full of jokes; various hoaxes are prepared by people, media (which sometimes cooperate to make the "information" more credible) and even public institutions. Serious activities are usually avoided. This conviction is so strong that the anti-Turkish alliance with *Leopold I* signed on April 1, 1683, was backdated to March 31.

April Fools' Day



An "April Fool" hoax in *Copenhagen*, Denmark in 2001, featuring its new metro

Also called	All Fools' Day
Type	Cultural, Western
Significance	Practical pranks
Date	April 1
Observances	Humour



Simple English
Slovenščina
Српски / Srpski
Suomi
Svenska
தமிழ்
Татарча/Tatarça
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Türkçe
Українська
Tiếng Việt
Walon
עברית
粵語
中文

In Scotland, April Fools' Day is traditionally called Hunt-the-Gowk Day ("gowk" is **Scots** for a cuckoo or a foolish person), although this name has fallen into disuse. The traditional prank is to ask someone to deliver a sealed message requesting help of some sort. In fact, the message reads "Dinna laugh, dinna smile. Hunt the gowk another mile". The recipient, upon reading it, will explain he can only help if he first contacts another person, and sends the victim to this person with an identical message, with the same result.^[11]

In Denmark, May 1 is known as "Maj-kat", meaning "May-cat", and is also a joking day. May 1 is also celebrated in Sweden as an alternative joking day. When someone has been fooled in Sweden, to disclose that it was a joke, the fooler says the rhyme "April April din dumma sill, jag kan lura dig vart jag vill" (April, April, you stupid herring, I can fool you to wherever I want") for April 1 jokes, or "Maj maj måne, jag kan lura dig till Skåne" (May May moon, I can fool you into Scania) for May 1 jokes. Both Danes and Swedes also celebrate April Fools' Day ("aprilsnar" in Danish). Pranks on May 1, are much less frequent. Most Swedish news media outlets will publish exactly one false story on April 1, for newspapers this will typically be a first-page article but not the top headline.

In Spain and **Ibero-America**, an equivalent date is December 28, Christian day of celebration of the **Massacre of the Innocents**. The Christian celebration is a holiday in its own right, a religious one, but the tradition of pranks is not, though the latter is observed yearly. After somebody plays a joke or a prank on somebody else, the joker usually cries out, in some regions of Ibero-America: "*Inocente palomita que te dejaste engañar*" ("*You innocent little dove that let yourself be fooled*"). In Spain, it is common to say just "*Inocente!*" ("*Innocent!*"). Nevertheless, in the Spanish island of **Menorca**, "*Dia d'enganyar*" ("Fooling day") is celebrated on April 1 because Menorca was a British possession during part of the 18th century.^[*citation needed*]

See also

- April Fool** is the codename for a spy and **double agent** who allegedly played a key role in the downfall of the Iraqi President **Saddam Hussein**.
- April Fools' Day RFC**
- Edible Book Day**
- Fools Guild**, entertainment troupe which holds a party in Los Angeles every April Fool's Day
- Fossil Fools Day**
- Google's hoaxes**
- Jafr alien invasion**
- List of April Fool's Day jokes**
- Pegasus Award**, a **tongue-in-cheek** honour presented on April 1 in the field of "Paranormal fraud".
- Sizdah Bedar**, the last day of two-week springtime celebrations for the Persian New Year is a day of pranks, very similar to April Fools' Day.
- Spaghetti trees**
- Unofficial observances**

References

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 - ↑ *The Canterbury Tales*, "The Nun's Priest's Tale" - "Chaucer in the Twenty-First Century", *University of Maine at Machias* , September 21, 2007
 - ↑ Carol Poster, Richard J. Utz, *Disputatio: an international transdisciplinary journal of the late middle ages* , Volume 2, pp. 16-17 (1997).
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 - ↑ Compare to **Valentine's Day**, a holiday that originated with a similar misunderstanding of Chaucer.
 - ↑ Eloy d'Amerval, *Le Livre de la Deablerie* , Librairie Droz, p. 70. (1991). "De maint homme et de mainte fame, poisson d'Aprvil vien tost a moy."
 - ↑ Groves, Marsha, *Manners and Customs in the Middle Ages* , p. 27, 2005.
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External links

- Museum of Hoaxes: **Top 100 April Fools' Day hoaxes of all time**

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[hide]

Sports-related	Super Bowl I Sunday · March Madness · Opening Day · World Series ·
Politics-related	Inauguration Day · Super Tuesday · Tax Day · Election Day ·
Business-related	Black Friday · Small Business Saturday · Cyber Monday ·
Other	Groundhog Day · April Fools' Day · Oktoberfest ·

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