

The last day of the year, 31 December, is a night to celebrate. Find out how people celebrate New Year in the UK.

Before reading

Do the preparation task first. Then read the article and do the exercises to check your understanding.

Preparation task

Match the definitions (a–h) with the vocabulary (1–8).

Vocabulary

1. the eve
2. to get together
3. a fireworks display
4. to link arms
5. a tradition
6. coal
7. to give up
8. to stick to something

Definition

- a. an organised show where people watch fireworks outside
- b. something people usually do at a special time, and have done for many years
- c. a hard, black substance that you can burn to make heat
- d. to meet with other people and spend time with them
- e. to continue trying hard to do something difficult
- f. the day or period of time before an important event
- g. to stop doing something before you have finished it, usually because it is too difficult
- h. to put your arm around the arm of the person next to you

New Year

New Year's Eve

New Year's Eve is the last day of the year, 31 December. It's one of the biggest party nights of the year all around the UK. The celebrations start in the early evening as people get together with family and friends. In many cities, people go out to watch fireworks displays or light shows at midnight. Just after midnight, it's traditional to link arms with the people around you and sing a song called 'Auld Lang Syne', which is about remembering your old friends.

New Year's Eve in London

The biggest fireworks display in England is in central London. Many people go to Big Ben, the famous clock tower, to hear it ring 12 times at midnight and then watch the fireworks over the River Thames.

New Year in Scotland

In Scotland, New Year celebrations are called 'Hogmanay'. The biggest Hogmanay celebration is in Edinburgh, the country's capital city. There are music concerts, street performers and fireworks. In fact, it is one of the largest street parties in the world! In Scotland, many people also have a tradition called 'first-footing'. The 'first foot' is the first person to visit your house in the new year, and the first foot is said to bring you luck for the whole year. To do this, they bring a lucky gift, such as coal for the fire, food to eat or coins. According to tradition, tall, dark-haired men bring the most luck.

New Year at home

It's not a big street party for everyone, though. Lots of families stay at home together and have a quiet evening. People often watch the fireworks and celebrations on TV, and then send 'Happy New Year!' messages to family and friends after midnight.

New Year's Day

The first day of the new year is a public holiday in the UK, so many people don't have to go to work. Some people like to go for a New Year's Day swim, and take part in outdoor swimming events. The water is very cold on 1 January, so it's important to put on warm clothes and have a hot drink after the swim! Other people prefer shopping, and some shops start their January sales on this day. They sell clothes, electronics, toys and other things at lower prices than usual.

New Year's resolutions

After all the celebrations, it's traditional to make plans for the new year. These plans are called 'New Year's resolutions', and the idea is to make some positive changes in your life. Some of the most popular resolutions for teenagers are to organise your study time, be a good friend, save money and learn something new.

Many people make New Year's resolutions but then, after a week or a month, they find it difficult to continue and even give up. To help you to keep going, it's important to make simple resolutions that are easy to do. You can write your resolutions on a piece of paper to help you remember your plans. It's also easier to stick to your resolutions if you involve other people. For example, you could go running with a friend or study for your exams with a classmate.

Tasks

Task 1

Match the tradition (1–6) with its meaning (a–f).

Tradition	Meaning
1. 'first-footing'	a. a special song, sung on New Year's Eve just after midnight
2. New Year's Day swim	b. the name of New Year's celebrations in Scotland
3. 'Hogmanay'	c. the Scottish tradition of the first visitor of the year bringing good luck
4. January sales	d. going in cold water on the first day of the year
5. 'Auld Lang Syne'	e. plans to do good things in the new year
6. New Year's Resolutions	f. shopping for clothes and other things at low prices

Task 2

Complete the sentences with words from the box.

midnight	fireworks	up	first
to	together	resolutions	Eve

1. The last day of the year is called New Year's
2. People get with friends and family to celebrate.
3. In many cities, like London and Edinburgh, there are displays.
4. In London, people can hear Big Ben ring 12 times at
5. In Scotland, people say that the person to visit your house brings good luck.
6. People make New Year's to try to make positive changes to their lives.
7. Many people give their resolutions after a week or a month.
8. Sometimes it's easier to stick your resolutions if you make plans with friends.

Discussion

How do you usually celebrate New Year's Eve? Do you make any resolutions?

Answers

Preparation task

1. f
2. d
3. a
4. h
5. b
6. c
7. g
8. e

Task 1

1. c
2. d
3. b
4. f
5. a
6. e

Task 2

1. Eve
2. together
3. fireworks
4. midnight
5. first
6. resolutions
7. up
8. to