

What happens on April Fools' Day?

[April Fools'](#) is a light-hearted day of [national japey](#) celebrated every year on April 1st. Millions of people in homes and offices up and down the land spend the morning of [April 1](#) playing practical jokes on each other in the hope of a [quick laugh](#) (and to avoid doing work).

The [media love to play](#) the joker too, and many publications relish the once-a-year chance to publish a [pretend news story to wind up their readers](#).

Where did April Fool's day originate?

The origins of the day are uncertain. Most people think it stems from Pope Gregory XIII.

In 1582, he wanted his new Gregorian calendar to replace the old Julian Calendar. This called for New Year's Day to be celebrated on January 1 instead of the end of March.

But some people apparently didn't get the memo and continued to celebrate New Year's Day on April 1. These poor folk were made fun of and were sent on 'fools errands' for a laugh.

However, others think April Fools' Day stems from the age when people used to hold spring festivals marking the end of winter with 'mayhem and misrule', according to the Museum of Hoaxes.

The Ancient Roman festival of Hilaria celebrated the resurrection of the god Attis and involved dressing in disguise.

Many other cultures have held renewal festivals in Europe around April 1 and there are references to these dating back to the 1500s.

What is clear though is that by the 1700s, the day of hilarity was well entrenched in Britain, and now April 1 is officially the most amusing day of the year.

April Fools around the world

April Fools' is celebrated in many countries all over the world, including Poland, Scotland and even Iran.

The French call the day Poisson d'Avril, or 'April Fish'. French children will often tape a picture of a fish on to the back of their friends and wait for them to realise. This is also the case in Italy.

In Scotland, April Fools' Day used to be called Huntigowk Day – gowk being Scots for a cuckoo or a foolish person.

Traditionally people were sent on a foolish errand to deliver a sealed message reading 'Dinna laugh, dinna smile. Hunt the gowk another mile'.

In Iran pranks have been played on April 1 since 536 BC. The day is the 13th day of the Persian New Year, and is called Sizdah Bedar. Families and friends will mark the new season by spending the afternoon outside with food, games and jokes.

[India's Holi festival is celebrated on March 31.](#) On this day people play jokes, throw coloured dust and wear face and body paint to officially welcome spring.

Meanwhile, in Portugal people throw flour over each other.

Danes, Finns, Icelanders, Norwegians and Swedes also celebrate April Fools' Day, heralding warmer weather after the long winter.

April Fools' Day on stage and screen

Although no reference is made to April Fools' Day in any of Shakespeare's works, many of his plays feature a fool, clown or jester character.

Puck and Bottom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, The Fool in *King Lear* and Feste in *Twelfth Night* are perhaps the most notable examples.

The fool was usually a clever peasant or commoner who used his wits to outdo people of higher social standing. The character often appears after dramatic or horrific scenes, bringing a bit of light or comic relief to the stage. The fool was also used to make complex ideas easier for the audience to understand.

The 1986 horror film *April Fool's Day* featured a group of college students staying at a friend's remote island mansion. They begin to fall victim to an unseen murderer over the April Fools' Day weekend. A remake of the film was made in 2008.