

Choosing the Right Calendar Takes Time, and Time is Ticking Toward 2014!

As It Is – December 31, 2013

From VOA Learning English, welcome to As It Is for New Year's Eve. I'm Steve Ember.

Today, calendars – choosing the right one takes time. And New Year's Resolutions – Making ones you can keep takes...well, we'll talk about that, and even share some of ours.

The New Year is the time for new beginnings. It is also the time to buy a new calendar. Have you bought yours yet?

With so many choices, it can take a lot of time just to choose the right one. There are small ones. Big ones. Calendars that sit on a desk. Calendars that hang on the wall. Calendars you can carry around with you. Calendars that show a whole month, or one day at a time.

Of course, in one way all calendars are the same. They all list the same days of the year in exactly the same order. But people do not buy calendars just to know what day it is. Calendars have become popular gifts because many are filled with beautiful pictures.

You can even learn from calendars. They often give information about their subject -- such as famous writers or American Indians or flower gardens.

There are calendars about food and about beautiful places in the world.

[Sound of a playful cat]

For pet lovers, there are calendars with pictures of cats doing unusual things. Three hundred sixty-five of them – one for each day of the year. And of course, there's one more in leap years.

Would you rather look at pictures of cars? Or trains? Or airplanes? There are calendars with those, too.

Some people do not just look at their calendars. They use them to write down important things they must remember, like meetings or doctor's appointments. Busy people can buy small calendars to carry around to help them organize and plan their life. But what if they forget to look at their calendar? No worries there - there are electronic organizers that make sounds to remind people of things they must do. These days, if you forget something, it is getting harder and harder to find a good excuse.

Then, there are some people do not like little calendars, or big ones, or noisy electronic ones. They are happy just to write down notes to themselves on small pieces of paper.

Then, there's the matter of New Year's Resolutions....have you made yours? More importantly, do you keep yours? We'll talk about that next.

It's As It Is, New Year's Eve edition from VOA Learning English, I'm Steve Ember.

New Year's Resolutions – Plan to keep yours?

Now, depending on where in the world you are and when you're joining us, the start of the New Year is just hours, or maybe minutes, or even seconds away.

Yes, the clock is ticking toward 2014. As far back in history as we can tell, people have celebrated the start of a new year. The people of ancient Egypt began their new year in summer. That is when the Nile River flooded its banks, bringing water and fertility to the land.

Today, most people celebrate New Year's Day on January first. People observe the New Year's holiday in many different ways, usually starting with New Year's Eve.

The ancient Babylonians celebrated the New Year by forcing their king to give up his crown and royal clothing. They made him get down on his knees and admit all the mistakes he had made during the past year.

That idea of admitting mistakes and finishing the business of the old year is found in many cultures at New Year's.

So is the idea of making New Year's resolutions. A resolution is a promise to change or do something different in the coming year.

Making New Year's resolutions is a common American tradition. Breaking them is, too!

Today, popular resolutions might include the promise to lose weight, stop smoking, or be more productive at work.

Some members of our Learning English group have offered New Year's resolutions of their own, and told me I could share them. So here goes.

One of our people promised to stop telling stories about others. That practice is known as gossip. Another staff member promised to spend more time with his family. Our boss resolved to be "the best Dad ever."

And one said about resolutions, "Oh, I gave that up years ago."

Here's one we've *all* at least *thought* about:

[Sound of lottery terminal]

"I resolve to win the lottery." Another colleague wants to stop smoking. Every year, she says, she makes that resolution...and every year it hasn't happened. Well, maybe in 2014.

Another one of our group is resolving to lose some weight. Those resolutions usually have to wait until after the holiday season. Lots of festive meals, you know.

Here's one I like: My resolution is to stop making resolutions, because I never keep them. For example, this colleague told me, I have not given up eating too many sweets, resolved on many a January first. She says, she will still work for chocolates! That's good to know.

One person – that would be me - decided to get a new cat to replace a much loved one that had recently died. Now, that resolution was made at the end of 2002. It took me almost two years to keep it, but in October of 2004, at an animal shelter in Virginia, I was “adopted” by a very handsome, and very talkative, gray and white cat. Mewer and I have been together ever since. He even helped me out on a recent As It Is, all about cats. Perhaps you heard him? He's the one that purrs like a diesel locomotive.

Other people use New Year's resolutions to make changes in how they live their lives. One such resolution might be to “stop and smell the roses.” That's always a pleasant thing to do, but what the expression means to take time to enjoy life's simple pleasures...instead of always being too busy and in a hurry.

Another resolution might be “don’t sweat the small stuff.” This means not to worry or get angry about unimportant things. Another resolution might be to be happy now and to forget about bad things that happened in the past. Or, to be thankful for the most important things in life, like family and friends.

Here’s a little musical resolution I made – to wrap up today’s program with a musical question.

Maybe it’s much too early in the game

Ah, but I thought I’d ask you just the same

What’re you doing New Year’s Eve?

That’s Margaret Whiting’s classic recording of the Frank Loesser tune “What Are You Doing New Year’s Eve”

As It Is is a production of VOA Learning English.

Steve Ember here, and no matter what you’re doing New Year’s Eve our resolution is to wish you a happy, healthy and productive New Year! See you in 2014.

[Margaret Whiting continues]

Maybe I’m crazy to suppose

I’d ever be the one you chose

Out of a thousand invitations you’ll receive...

