

April Fool's Day is a special day for jokes and tricks in many countries. Read this article to find out all about it.

## Before reading

Do the preparation task first. Then read the article and do the exercises.

### Preparation task

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

#### Vocabulary

1. .... a practical joke
2. .... to play a trick on someone
3. .... to fall for something
4. .... hilarious
5. .... an errand
6. .... a hoax
7. .... to fool someone
8. .... light-hearted

#### Definition

- a. a trick to make people believe something that is not true
- b. to be tricked into believing something that is not true
- c. amusing; not serious
- d. a trick that surprises someone and makes them look silly
- e. a short trip you take in order to do something
- f. to do something to somebody which makes people laugh
- g. very funny
- h. to trick someone

## April Fool's Day

April Fool's Day is celebrated on 1 April in many countries around the world. On this day, people traditionally play practical jokes on each other and have fun trying to make other people believe things that are not true.

### April Fool's traditions

In the UK, jokes and tricks can be played up until noon on 1 April. After midday it's considered bad luck to play a trick. Anyone who forgets this and tries a joke in the afternoon becomes an 'April Fool' themselves.

So, what kind of jokes do people play? Well, a simple example would be telling your friend that their shoelaces are undone. Then, when they bend down to do them up, you shout, 'April Fool!', and they realise their shoelaces are fine. Maybe it's not your kind of humour, but watch out, there's always someone who will find it hilarious! In Ireland, a popular prank is to send someone on a 'fool's errand'. The victim is sent to deliver a letter, supposedly asking for help. When the person receives the letter, they open it, read it and tell the poor messenger that they will have to take the letter to another person. This continues and the victim ends up

taking the message to several different people until someone feels sorry for them and shows them what the letter says: 'Send the fool to someone else.'

In France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy and French-speaking areas of Canada and Switzerland, the 1 April tradition is known as the 'April Fish'. A common joke is to try to stick a paper fish onto a victim's back without being noticed.

### April Fool's Day in the media

Some newspapers, TV channels and well-known companies publish false news stories to fool people on 1 April. One of the earliest examples of this was in 1957, when a programme on the BBC, the UK's national TV channel, broadcast a report on how spaghetti grew on trees. The film showed a family in Switzerland collecting spaghetti from trees and many people were fooled into believing it, as in the 1950s British people didn't eat much pasta and many didn't know how it was made! Most British people wouldn't fall for the spaghetti trick today, but in 2008 the BBC managed to fool their audience again with their *Miracles of Evolution* trailer, which appeared to show some special penguins that had regained the ability to fly. Two major UK newspapers, *The Daily Telegraph* and the *Daily Mirror*, published the 'important story' on their front pages.

On April Fool's Day 1998, the American hamburger chain Burger King announced that it had created a left-handed hamburger. The advert for the 'new product' explained that all the ingredients had been rotated 180 degrees so that it was more comfortable for left-handed people to pick up and eat. The following day, Burger King admitted that this advertisement had been a hoax, but said that thousands of customers had gone to restaurants across the USA asking for a left-handed burger.

### April Fool's Day controversy

April Fool's Day fans say it encourages fun and laughter, and one study found that it reduces stress and therefore could be good for your heart. Other people point out that it can have negative consequences, like confusion, worry or wasting time and resources. For example, a spokesperson for Dublin Zoo said staff had 'lost their sense of humour' after they received more than 100,000 calls asking for invented names such as Mr C Lyons, Anna Conda and G Raffe! The callers were victims of a phone hoax, who contacted the zoo after receiving a text message encouraging them to make the call.

In the era of 'fake news' it's often hard on a normal day of the year to work out when we're being tricked into believing something that isn't true, but on April Fool's Day you need to be even more alert. No one knows exactly how the tradition started, but there are plenty of people who enjoy this light-hearted day and are happy to keep the tradition alive.

## Tasks

### Task 1

Are the sentences true or false?

	<b>Answer</b>	
1. In the UK, you can play an April Fool's Day trick all day on 1 April.	True	False
2. In Ireland, the 'fool's errand' joke usually involves only two people.	True	False
3. Very few people believed the 1957 April Fool's story about spaghetti growing on trees.	True	False
4. In 1998, a lot of people in the United States wanted to try the left-handed hamburger.	True	False
5. Some people say that April Fool's Day can have positive health effects.	True	False
6. The spokesperson for Dublin Zoo was called Anna Conda.	True	False
7. On 1 April, you should watch out for fake news even more than usual.	True	False
8. The origins of April Fool's Day are clear.	True	False

### Task 2

Read the sentences and then write the correct form of the word in brackets in the gaps.

1. April Fool's Day is a ..... where people play tricks on each other. (celebrate)
2. The victim of the 'fool's errand' joke is the ..... . (message)
3. In French-speaking areas of Canada, 1 April is ..... known as the 'April Fish'. (tradition)
4. Thousands of customers went to Burger King after seeing an ..... for a new burger. (advertise)
5. Burger King said its new hamburger was more ..... for left-handed people. (comfort)
6. Fun and ..... on April Fool's Day can reduce stress levels. (laugh)
7. Many people find April Fool's Day very ..... . (enjoy)
8. After receiving thousands of prank calls, a ..... for Dublin Zoo said staff had 'lost their sense of humour'. (speak)

### Discussion

Have you ever been tricked or played a trick on anybody?

## Answers

### Preparation task

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

### Task 1

1. False
2. False
3. False
4. True
5. True
6. False
7. True
8. False

### Task 2

1. celebration
2. messenger
3. traditionally
4. advert | advertisement | ad
5. comfortable
6. laughter
7. enjoyable
8. spokesperson | spokeswoman | spokesman