

International Day of Friendship

July 30 is the United Nations International Day of Friendship. Read about the importance of friendship and find out why the UN decided to give it a special day.

Before reading

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

Preparation task

Match the expressions that have the same meaning.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| 1. to be based on | a. for one person |
| 2. to cross borders | b. for the whole world |
| 3. to spread | c. lots of different kinds |
| 4. on a global level | d. to develop from |
| 5. all shapes and sizes | e. to become larger and move to new places |
| 6. a greeting | f. the main idea or meaning doesn't change |
| 7. on an individual level | g. to exist in more than one country |
| 8. the spirit is the same | h. something you say when you begin speaking or writing to someone |

International Day of Friendship

The importance of friends

Friends come in all shapes and sizes. They may be someone we met as a child, a classmate at school, someone we met at work or through other friends. They may be friends who live at a distance in another country or virtual friends we've made online. Whoever they are, however we met them, there is a special connection based on a shared history and interests, enjoying doing things together or simply talking and understanding each other. Friends are there to help us at difficult times and to celebrate the good times. Doctors say that friends are very important for both our physical and mental health at all stages in life.

Declaring an international Friendship Day

But friends are not only important on an individual level. Friendship can also be important on a global level. Friendships that cross borders can help bring peace and avoid war. Learning to think of other people, people who are different from us, as our friends helps us work together to build a culture of peace. That's why the UN declared 30 July as its official International Day of Friendship.

The origins of the day

An international celebration was first suggested by the World Friendship Crusade. This organisation was founded by Dr Ramón Artemio Bracho and his friends in Puerto Pinasco, Paraguay, in 1958. They wanted to support the power of friendship and its importance in creating a culture of peace. So, in the same year, they decided to celebrate Friendship Week in Puerto Pinasco and other places in Paraguay. The following year, they repeated the week and finished on 30 July, which they declared as Friendship Day. From there, celebrations of friendship grew and spread across the Americas, then the world, and eventually the UN declared an International Day of Friendship in 2011.

Friendship Days around the world

The International Day of Friendship on 30 July is not the only day celebrating friendship around the world. A number of countries, such as Paraguay, also celebrate on 30 July, but other countries have different dates. For example, Argentina, Brazil and Spain celebrate Friend's Day on 20 July, while in India and the US, they celebrate it on the first Sunday in August. In Finland and Estonia, Friendship Day is celebrated on the same day as Valentine's Day, 14 February.

What do people do on the International Day of Friendship?

Wherever it's celebrated, the celebrations are very similar. Friends meet up to spend time together. They may eat out or have a meal at home. They give each other small gifts: books, flowers, simple jewellery such as a friendship band (a simple bracelet). Some people send each other cards and greetings online. Whatever form the celebration takes, the spirit is the same – to remember the importance of friends and the power of friendship.

Tasks

Task 1

Circle the best answer.

1. What is the date of the United Nations International Day of Friendship?
 - a. 20 July
 - b. 30 July
2. In what year was the UN International Day of Friendship officially declared?
 - a. 1958
 - b. 2011

3. Who first thought of declaring an international Friendship Day?
 - a. Dr Ramón Artemio Bracho
 - b. the UN

4. Why is it important to celebrate friendships across borders?
 - a. Because they help create a culture of peace
 - b. Because people make friends online

5. What gifts do people usually give each other?
 - a. Money and expensive jewellery
 - b. Simple gifts like flowers and books

6. How do people usually celebrate the day?
 - a. People go to a public meeting
 - b. Friends spend time together

Task 2

Write the countries in the correct group.

Spain	Paraguay	Brazil	India
Finland	Argentina	Estonia	the USA

This country celebrates on 30 July	These countries celebrate on 20 July
These countries celebrate in August	These countries celebrate on 14 February

Discussion

Do you agree that friends are important?

Answers

Preparation task

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

Task 1

1. b
2. b
3. a
4. a
5. b
6. b

Task 2

This country celebrates on 30 July	These countries celebrate on 20 July
Paraguay	Spain Brazil Argentina
These countries celebrate in August	These countries celebrate on 14 February
India the USA	Finland Estonia