

Summary of Common U.S. Holidays

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This document is an attempt to fairly comprehensively summarize the important dates commonly observed in the United States, including important occasions observed by major immigrant groups.

==== ** Periodic **====

Approximately every 28 days: Full Moon.

Day in each month when the moon appears fullest. Time varies. A "blue moon" refers to the rare second full moon in a single month.

Future dates: 1997.10.16, 1997.11.14, 1997.12.14, 1998.01.12, 1998.02.11, 1998.03.13, 1998.04.11, 1998.05.11, 1998.06.10, 1998.07.09, 1998.08.08, 1998.09.06, 1998.10.05, 1998.11.04, 1998.12.03, 1999.01.02, 1999.01.31, 1999.03.02, 1999.03.31, 1999.04.30, 1999.05.30, 1999.06.28, 1999.07.28, 1999.08.26, 1999.09.25, 1999.10.24, 1999.11.23, 1999.12.22, 2000.01.21, 2000.02.19, 2000.03.20, 2000.04.18, 2000.05.18, 2000.06.16, 2000.07.16, 2000.08.15, 2000.09.13, 2000.10.13, 2000.11.11, 2000.12.11, 2001.01.09, 2001.02.08, 2001.03.09, 2001.04.08, 2001.05.07, 2001.06.06, 2001.07.05, 2001.08.04, 2001.09.02, 2001.10.02, 2001.11.01, 2001.11.30, 2001.12.30.

==== ** January **====

January 1st: New Year's Day.

First day of the year. New Year's Day is often observed by the making of New Year's resolutions, personal commitments to specific behavioral changes.

New Year's Day is a legal holiday.

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January 6th: Epiphany.

Epiphany, a Christian holiday, observes the visit of the Magi to the baby Jesus, 12 days after Christmas. Some Eastern Christians observe this date as Christmas, and Epiphany on January 19th.

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January 8th: Elvis Presley's Birthday.

Elvis Aaron Presley was born in Tupelo MS in 1935, and died on August 16th, 1977. Often referred to as the king of rock and roll. Observed by enjoying Elvis memorabilia, his 33 films, music and impersonators.

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January 17th: Benjamin Franklin's Birthday.

Born in Boston MA in 1706, one of thirteen children of a puritan family, died in Philadelphia on April 17th, 1790. Day to remember the great early American scientist, thinker and statesman. Franklin is remembered for his Poor Richard's Almanac, the discovery of the electrical nature of lightning leading to the invention of the lightning rod, and for his political activities in

pre-revolutionary America. Because Franklin recommended thrift, some schools start a Thrift Week on his birthday.

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January 20th: Start of Aquarius astrological sign.
Aquarius, the water bearer.

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January 20th (every fourth year): Inauguration Day.
Begins the term of a newly elected president.
Future dates: 2001.01.20, 2005.01.20.

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Third Monday in January: Martin Luther King Jr. Day.
This day is set aside in the United states to honor the memory of the famed civil rights leader. Born on January 15th, 1929 in Atlanta GA, he fought segregation through the 1950s and 60s. He was shot and killed on April 4th, 1968 in Memphis TN by James Earl Ray. This day is used to reflect on issues of civil rights and racial equality.

Martin Luther King Jr. Day is a legal holiday.

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January 30th: Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Birthday.

The 32nd president of the United States, he was born in New York in 1882 to a wealthy family, and died in office in April 1945. He held office for an unprecedented four terms, leading America through the great depression and World War II.

===== ***** February *****
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Late January, Early February (second new moon after winter solstice):
Chinese New Year.

Start of Chinese year, which is based on a lunar calendar. Observed with 14 days of joyous festivities.

Future dates: 1998.01.28, 1999.02.16, 2000.02.05, 2001.01.24.

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February: Black History Month.

February contains the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and abolitionist Frederick Douglass. During February recognition is given to the achievements and contributions of African Americans. This holiday was initiated by Carter G. Woodson in February 1926.

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February 2nd: Groundhog Day.

According to folklore, the groundhog (or woodchuck) emerges from hibernation on this day. If the day is sunny and the groundhog sees his shadow, legend holds that there will be six more weeks of winter. Alternately, a cloudy day signals an early spring. This is celebrated with particular vigor in Punxsutawney, PA.

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February 2nd: Candlemas.

Commemorates the presentation of Jesus in the Temple. Observed in northern Europe much like groundhog day. In some areas it marks the beginning of spring planting. This day is used for the consecration of church candles for the year.

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February 8th: Boy Scout Day.

Anniversary of the incorporation of the Boy Scouts of America in 1910.

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February 11th: Thomas Alva Edison's Birthday.

Day to remember the extremely successful inventor and entrepreneur, credited with the invention of the electric lightbulb and the phonograph. Edison was born in Milan Ohio in 1847 and died on October 18th, 1931.

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February 12th: Abraham Lincoln's Birthday.

Day to remember the 16th president of the United states who presided during the Civil War. He was born in Kentucky in 1809. Lincoln was shot and killed in the Ford Theater in Washington by John Wilkes Booth just five days after the end of the war. Lincoln's birthday is observed later in February, on President's Day.

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February 14th: Valentine's Day.

Day to exchange messages of love with the object of one's romantic interest. Typically observed through the gifting of roses and heart shaped boxes of chocolates. The day gets its name from the Christian saint Valentine.

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February 19th: Start of Pisces astrological sign.

Pisces, the fishes.

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Third Monday in February: President's Day.

Day to observe the birthdays of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. President's Day is a legal holiday.

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February 22nd: George Washington's Birthday.

Day to remember George Washington, the first president of the United States and commander in chief of the Continental army during the American Revolution. He was born in 1732 and died of an illness on December 14th, 1799. Washington's birthday is observed on President's Day.

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March

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Late February, Early March (3 days preceding Lent): Carnival.

Also known as Shrovetide. Carnival, a Christian holiday, is the name given to the three days of festivities culminating on Mardi Gras. Carnival is the Sunday, Monday and Tuesday preceding Ash Wednesday.

Future dates: 1998.02.21, 1999.02.13, 2000.03.04, 2001.02.24.

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Late February, Early March (Tuesday before Ash Wednesday): Mardi Gras.
Mardi Gras (French for Fat Tuesday), a Christian holiday, is the last day of the period of carnival preceding Ash Wednesday. This name has come to represent the entire carnival period. Mardi Gras is celebrated on a particularly large scale in New Orleans, Rio de Janeiro, and Nice. In those cities, Mardi Gras is celebrated with music, costumes, parades and dancing.
Future dates: 1998.02.24, 1999.02.16, 2000.03.06, 2001.02.27.

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Late February, Early March (First day of Lent): Ash Wednesday.
Ash Wednesday, a Christian holiday, is the first day of Lent and the seventh Wednesday preceding Easter. The name originates from the ritual of placing ashes on worshippers foreheads, symbolizing death and sorrow for sin.
Future dates: 1998.02.25, 1999.02.17, 2000.03.08, 2001.02.28.

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Late February, Early March (One month period preceding Easter): Lent.
Lent, a Christian holiday, is a 40 day period of penitence, prayer and fasting preceding Easter. Observance of Lent begins six and one half weeks before Easter, on Ash Wednesday. Over time, the fasting has been de-emphasized, and the importance of prayer and works of charity has grown. Lent was first observed in the 4th century.
Future dates: 1998.02.25, 1999.02.17, 2000.03.08, 2001.02.28.

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February or March: Purim.
Purim, a Jewish holiday, is observed on Adar 14 and 15 by the Hebrew calendar. This day commemorates queen Esther's intervention in the 5th century BC to save the Jews of Persia. The story of her actions is retold on this day.
Future dates: 1998.03.12, 1999.03.02, 2000.03.21, 2001.03.09.

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First Monday in March: Pulaski Day.
Basically a Polish pride day. Casimir (Kazimierz) Pulaski lived from 1747 to 1779. He came to the U.S. in 1777 and was made a general in the revolutionary army in 1778.
Pulaski Day is observed as a legal holiday in Chicago.

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March 8th: International (Working) Women's Day.
Celebrates the women's liberation movement. This day is used to reflect on issues of women's rights and gender equality.

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March 17th: Saint Patrick's Day.
Saint Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland, lived from 389 to 461 AD. He was a bishop and missionary, and was born in Britain.

This day is typically observed by the wearing of some green article of clothing, consumption of beer, and enjoyment of Irish music and dance.

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March 21st: Start of Aries astrological sign.

Aries, the ram.

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About March 21st: Vernal Equinox.

Day in spring when the night and day are of equal length. Official first day of the spring season.

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March 25th: Feast of the Annunciation.

This Christian holiday commemorates the angel Gabriel's announcement to Mary of the coming birth of Jesus.

===== ***** April *****

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Late March, Early April (Sunday before Easter): Palm Sunday.

Palm Sunday, a Christian holiday, is the Sunday before Easter. It is the sixth (last) Sunday of Lent. It commemorates the arrival of Jesus into Jerusalem, one week before resurrection, when the people placed palm branches in his path.

Future dates: 1998.04.05, 1999.03.28, 2000.04.16, 2001.04.08.

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Late March, Early April (Friday before Easter): Good Friday.

Good Friday, a Christian Holiday, commemorates the death of Jesus Christ. It is observed on the Friday preceding Easter. Good Friday is typically observed by the reading the passion, the ceremony of the veneration of the cross, communion from the sacrament consecrated the day before, and preaching on the seven last words.

Future dates: 1998.04.10, 1999.04.02, 2000.04.21, 2001.04.13.

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Late March, Early April (immediately precedes Easter): Passover.

Passover ("Pesach" in Hebrew) is one of the most important Jewish festivals. It is celebrated on Nisan 15-22 by the Hebrew calendar, which falls between late March and early April.

Passover commemorates the Exodus, or the freeing of Israel from Egyptian slavery in the 13th century BC. The name Passover refers to the statement (Exod. 12:23) that God would pass over the homes of Israelites when killing the firstborn of Egypt. The Bible, however, applies the name to a festival involving a lamb sacrifice and the eating of unleavened bread. This was probably an ancient spring festival.

Passover is celebrated for one week. Work is not done on the first and last days. Only unleavened bread (matzo) is eaten throughout the week. Orthodox Jews abstain from all leavened food and even nonleavened food not specially prepared for the festival.

The first two evenings of Passover are observed by a festal meal, called Seder. During Seder the story of the Exodus is told through the reading of the Haggadah and the symbols of the occasion are explained.

Easter in English is called Passover in many other languages. The Passover lamb is seen as foreshadowing the sacrifice of Jesus.

Future dates: 1998.04.11, 1999.04.01, 2000.04.20, 2001.04.09.

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Late March, Early April (Follows Lent, simultaneous with Passover): Easter. Easter, a Christian holiday, celebrates the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The festival has its roots in the Jewish Passover. The crucifixion occurred during the Passover of AD c.30 and the resurrection three days later.

The name Easter is thought to derive from the pagan spring festival of the Anglo-Saxon goddess Eostre. Many Easter folk customs, colored eggs for example, are of pagan origin.

The date of Easter may be significantly different for Eastern Christian sects.

Future dates: 1998.04.12, 1999.04.04, 2000.04.23, 2001.04.15.

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First Sunday in April: Daylight Savings Time starts.

Daylight Savings Time (DST) denotes the period of the year when clocks are set ahead one hour. Settings clocks ahead in the summer (spring ahead), and back in the winter (fall back) allows the clock hour to better match the cycle of daylight and night. This provides more daylight time during waking hours.

DST was originally suggested by Benjamin Franklin in 1784. It began to be commonly observed during World War I. DST was formally adopted through the Uniform Time Act of 1966.

Daylight Savings Time ends on the last Sunday in October.

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April 1st: April Fools' Day.

Observed by playing practical jokes.

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April 7th: World Health Day.

Commemorates the founding of the World Health Organization in 1948. It is observed by reflecting on world health issues.

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April 8th: Flower Festival.

This Buddhist holiday celebrates Buddha's birthday.

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April 13th: Thomas Jefferson's Birthday.

Day to remember Thomas Jefferson, author of the Declaration of Independence, and a two term president (1801-09). Jefferson was also an accomplished architect, and served in many other significant political positions. He was born in 1743 and died on July 4th, 1826 at his home in Monticello, VA.

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April 14th: Pan American Day.

This date commemorates the first conference of American states in 1890.

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April 15th: Personal income tax returns due.

Income tax in the U.S. was instituted in the 16th amendment, ratified in 1913. Withholding was introduced to fund World War II.

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April 20th: Start of Taurus astrological sign.

Taurus, the bull.

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April 22nd: Earth Day.

Day to reflect on ecological issues and recommit one's efforts to the cooperative conservation and reclamation of the natural environment. First observed in 1970.

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April 22nd (third Friday in April in some states): Arbor Day.

This day is designated for the planting of trees.

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Fourth Wednesday in April: Secretaries Day.

Day to honor and be kind to secretaries.

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Fourth Thursday in April: Daughters to Work Day.

Parent's are encouraged to bring their daughters (and/or sons) to work on this day, and to use this opportunity to educate their children on the nature of employment.

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May

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April or May: Holocaust Day.

This holiday of Israeli origin is observed on Nisan 27th by the Hebrew calendar. It is a day for remembering the Nazi perpetrated holocaust of 1933-45, during which millions of Jews were killed.

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April 30th: Walpurgis Night.

Also known as witches' sabbath and eve of May Day. This day commemorates the 8th century saint Walpurgis, who was held to be a protectress against witchcraft. The specifics of observance of this holiday could not be readily determined by this author.

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May 1st: European Labor Day.

Also known as May day.

Equivalent to U.S. Labor day. Day to honor workers. Particularly observed by communist nations.

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May 5th: Cinco De Mayo.

This day commemorates a major victory by the outnumbered and underarmed Mexican army, against the occupying French, on May 5th of 1862. "Cinco de Mayo" is Spanish for May 5th.

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Tuesday of the second full week in May: National Teachers Day.
Part of National Teachers Week, sponsored by the National Educators Association. Day to honor and be kind to teachers.

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May 8th: V-E Day.
Victory in Europe day. Commemorates Germany's surrender in World War II, 1945.

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May 8th: Harry S. Truman's Birthday.
Day to remember the 33rd president of the U.S. (1945-1953), who presided during the Cold War and Korean War. Known for the New Deal economic policies. He was born in Lamar MO in 1884 and died on December 26th, 1972 in Kansas City MO.

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May 15th: Police Memorial Day.
Day to honors police killed while on duty.

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May 21st: Start of Gemini astrological sign.
Gemini, the twins.

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Second Sunday in May: Mother's Day.
Day to honor and be kind to mothers.
Created in 1914 by a proclamation from President Woodrow Wilson.

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Last Monday in May: Memorial Day.
Formerly called Decoration Day, observed since the civil war. This day Honors United States military personnel who died in wars. Typically observed by flying flags at half mast, and ceremonies at veteran's graves.
Memorial Day is a legal holiday.

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Third Saturday in May: Armed Forces Day.
Day to honor the U.S. combined armed forces.

===== ***** June *****

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Late May, Early June (40 days after Easter): Ascension Day.
Commemorates the ascension of Jesus Christ to heaven.
Future dates: 1998.05.21, 1999.05.13, 2000.06.01, 2001.05.24.

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Late May, Early June: Shabuoth.
Also spelled Shavuot. This Jewish holiday commemorates the revelation of the Torah at Sinai. It occurs on Sivan 6th by the Hebrew calendar.

Future dates: 1998.06.01, 1999.05.21, 2000.06.09, 2001.05.28.

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June 5th: World Environment Day.

Day to reflect on environmental concerns worldwide. This date marks the anniversary of the first UN Conference on Human Environment in 1972.

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June 6th: D-Day.

Anniversary of the Allied troops invasion of the Normandy region of France in 1944.

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June 11th: Kamehameha Day.

Commemorates the victories of Kamehameha I (1758-1819) of Hawaii. He and his descendants united and ruled the Hawaiian Islands until their annexation by the United States in 1898.

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June 14th: Flag Day.

In 1949 Congress designated this day as national Flag Day. It commemorated adoption by the Continental Congress in 1777 of the Stars and Stripes as the national flag. Some schools observe the day with instruction in flag etiquette and flag-raising ceremonies.

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Second Sunday in June: Children's Day.

Day to honor and be kind to children. Originated in 1856.

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June 19th: Juneteenth.

Date on which the freedom of the slaves was formally announced in Texas, more than two months after the end of the civil war in 1865. Especially observed in Texas.

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June 20th: Emancipation Day.

Day observing the end of slavery in the United States. President Lincoln declared all slaves free on January 1st, 1863.

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June 21st: Start of Cancer astrological sign.

Cancer, the crab.

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About June 22nd: Summer Solstice.

Day in summer when the day is longest. Official start of the summer season.

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June 23rd: Midsummer Eve.

This holiday observed in Europe, celebrates the return of summer.

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June 24th: St. John the Baptist Day.

Feast day honoring the Jewish prophet who preceded Jesus.

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Third Sunday in June: Father's Day.
Day to honor and be kind to fathers.

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Last Sunday in June Gay and Lesbian Pride Day.
This internationally observed occasion is used to increase public awareness and advocate the rights of homosexuals. Often observed with parades.

===== ***** July *****
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July 4th: Independence Day.
The Declaration of Independence from Great Britain was passed by the Continental Congress in Philadelphia on this day in 1776. It is typically observed with picnics and evening fireworks.
Independence Day is a legal holiday.

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July 14th: Bastille Day.
Anniversary of the beginning of the French Revolution in 1789, when a mob took over the Bastille prison in Paris.

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July 20th: First Moon Landing.
Apollo 11 was launched on July 16th, 1969, carrying astronauts Neil A. Armstrong, Edwin E. Aldrin, Jr. and Michael Collins. The spacecraft landed in the Mare Tranquillitatis at 3:17 PM CDT on July 20th. At 9:56 PM Armstrong became the first human to set foot on the moon, issuing the now famous phrase "one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind". Aldrin followed shortly while Collins remained in the orbiting command module.

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July 23rd: Start of Leo astrological sign.
Leo, the lion.

===== ***** August *****
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August 6th: Hiroshima Day.
On this day in 1945, an American bomber "Enola Gay" made the first wartime use of an atomic weapon. A single bomb was dropped on the Japanese city of Hiroshima, destroying it completely. This day is often used for anti-nuclear protests worldwide.

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August 14th: V-J Day.
Victory over Japan day. Commemorates the surrender of Japan, ending World War II in 1945.

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August 15th: Assumption Day.
This Christian holiday commemorates the Virgin Mary's assumption into heaven.

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August 19th: National Aviation Day.

Anniversary of Orville Wright's birthday in 1871.

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August 23rd: Start of Virgo astrological sign.
Virgo, the virgin.

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August 26th: Women's Equality Day.
Celebrates the anniversary of the 19th constitutional amendment ratified in 1920 granting women the right to vote. Formerly known as Woman Suffrage Day.

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August 27th: Lyndon B. Johnson's Birthday
Day to remember the 36th president of the U.S., who became president on November 22nd, 1963 following the assassination of John F. Kennedy. He is remembered for the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the War on Poverty, creating the Department of Housing and Urban Development and for passing the Voting Rights Act of 1965. He presided during the deepening U.S. involvement in Vietnam. He was born in Texas in 1908 and died in Texas on January 22nd, 1973.

===== ***** September *****

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First Monday in September: Labor Day.
Labor Day honors working people and celebrates their history and accomplishments. It was initiated in 1882 by the Knights of Labor. This holiday is essentially identical to the European May Day, celebrated on May 1st. First observed in New York City on Sept. 5, 1882. Labor Day is a legal holiday.

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First Sunday after Labor Day in September: National Grandparents Day
Day to honor and be kind to grandparents.
Future dates: 1998.09.13, 1999.09.12, 2000.09.10, 2001.09.09.

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September: Rosh Hashanah.
Rosh Hashanah ("head of the year" in Hebrew) is the Jewish New Year. This day commemorates the creation of the world. It is celebrated on Tishri 1 by the Hebrew calendar, which falls in early autumn. Rosh Hashanah begins the penitential season, culminating ten days later on Yom Kippur. The synagogue service includes the blowing of the Shofar (ram's horn), and liturgy stressing the sovereignty of God. It is customary on the first day, to go to a river or pond, and there to recite tashlich, scriptural verses about repentance and forgiveness of sin.
Future dates: 1997.10.02, 1998.09.21, 1999.09.11, 2000.09.30, 2001.09.18.

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September 16th: Mexican Independence Day.
Commemorates the call for independence from Spain in 1821.

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September 17th: Citizenship Day.

Day to give recognition to people who became American citizens in the preceding year. Established by Congress in 1952.

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September 23rd: Start of Libra astrological sign.

Libra, the balance.

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About September 23rd: Autumnal Equinox.

Day in fall when the night and day are of equal length. Official start of the fall season.

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Fourth Friday in September: Native American Day.

Day to honor native Americans.

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October

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Late September, Early October (10 days after Rosh Hashanah): Yom Kippur. Yom Kippur, the Jewish Day of Atonement, is celebrated on Tishri 10 of the Hebrew calendar, which falls in early autumn.

This Sabbath of Sabbaths is observed by fasting, confession to God of sins committed during the last year, and prayers for forgiveness. Observance begins the evening before, with the Kol Nidre service of repentance.

Future dates: 1997.10.11, 1998.09.30, 1999.09.20, 2000.10.09, 2001.09.27.

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Mid October: Sukkoth.

Jewish harvest festival and time for giving thanks. Observed on Tishri 15th by the Hebrew calendar.

Future dates: 1997.10.16, 1998.10.05, 1999.09.25, 2000.10.14, 2001.10.02.

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Late September, early October (two weeks through 1st October Sunday): Oktoberfest.

German harvest celebration, observed with the consumption of copious quantities of Germanic (German and Austrian) food and beer, and with music, dance and other folk customs. Formerly commemorated marriage of King Ludwig I on October 17th of 1810.

Future dates: 1997.09.21, 1998.09.20, 1999.09.19, 2000.09.17, 2001.09.23.

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October 8th: Chicago Fire Anniversary.

Anniversary of the great fire in 1871 which destroyed 1/3 of the city. Celebrated as part of Fire Prevention Week.

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October 12th: Farmer's Day.

Created in 1915 to stimulate interest in agriculture.

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Second Monday in October: Canadian Thanksgiving.

This holiday has had a variety of dates, back to the late 1500's, and was set to its current date in 1957 by the Canadian government. Though it evolved independently, it's observance is now very similar to the U.S. Thanksgiving.

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Second Monday in October: Columbus Day.

Also known as Discovery Day. Celebrates the landing of Christopher Columbus at San Salvador in 1492. Also observed to some extent as an Italian pride day.

Columbus Day is a legal holiday.

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October 16th: Bosses Day.

Day to honor and be kind to bosses.

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October 18th: Alaska Day.

Commemorates the transfer of Alaska from Russia to the United States in 1867.

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Third Saturday in October: Sweetest Day.

Day to honor and be kind to one's sweetheart.

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October 23rd: Start of Scorpio astrological sign.

Scorpio, the scorpion.

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October 23rd: Mother-In-Law's Day.

Day to honor and be kind to mothers-in-law.

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October 24th: United Nations Day.

Commemorates the ratification of the U.N. charter in 1945.

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Last Sunday in October: Daylight Savings Time ends.

See Daylight Savings Time starts for full information. Daylight Savings Time starts on the first Sunday in April.

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October or November: Diwali.

Translates to festival of lights. An important Hindu holiday, observed on Asvina 13th through Kartika 2nd by the Hindu calendar. This holiday honors Lakshmi, goddess of wealth.

Future dates: 1997.10.30, 1998.10.19, 1999.11.07, 2000.10.26. Also unconfirmed 2001.10.15.

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October 31st: Halloween.

Typically observed by the wearing of costumes, carving of pumpkins, gifting of small candies, and scary decorations. Ghosts, goblins and other mildly malevolent spirits figure prominently.

Originally a Celtic festival for the dead, later incorporated into the Christian holiday All Hallows' Eve, the night preceding All Saints' Day.

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***** November *****
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November 1st: All Saints' Day.

A Christian holiday, this day honors all known and unknown saints, and is usually observed with a feast.

Also observed in Mexico as Day of the Dead (El Dia de los Muertos).

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November 2nd: All Souls Day.

A Christian holiday set aside for paying respect to the dead.

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November 4th: Will Rogers birthday.

Day to remember the famed humorist and actor. He was born in 1879 and died on August 15th, 1935.

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November 5th: Guy Fawkes Day.

Anniversary of the Gunpowder Plot of 1605 to blow up the English king and parliament.

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November 11th: Veteran's Day.

Anniversary of the signing of the armistice which ended World War I in 1918. This day is also known as Armistice Day in Europe and Remembrance Day in Canada.

Veterans Day is a legal holiday.

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First Tuesday after first Monday in November, every fourth year: General Election Day.

Election of United States president.

Future dates: 2000.11.07, 2004.11.02.

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November 22nd: Start of Sagittarius astrological sign.

Sagittarius, the archer.

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Fourth Thursday in November: Thanksgiving Day.

A day to give thanks for the blessings and bounty one has received. Typically observed by a feast with family and friends where turkey is consumed.

The first Thanksgiving, three days of prayer and feasting, was celebrated in Plymouth in 1621. The colonists gave thanks for their first harvest and for having survived the terrible Massachusetts winter.

Thanksgiving Day is a legal holiday.

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***** December *****
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End of November, beginning of December: Chanukah.

Also spelled Hanukkah. This Jewish festival is from Kislev 25th through Tebet 3rd by the Hebrew calendar, which falls in December or January. Chanukah marks the reconsecration of the temple of Jerusalem after its recapture from the Syrian Greeks in 165 BC. The holiday lasts for eight days. On each day a new candle is lit on an eight branched candelabra called a menorah. This commemorates the miracle recorded in the Talmud when a one day supply of oil burned for eight days.

Future dates: 1997.12.24, 1998.12.14, 1999.12.04, 2000.12.22, 2001.12.10.

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December 1st: AIDS Awareness Day.

This internationally recognized day is used to increase public awareness about Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. This disease threatens everyone, and many hold that the best defense is education about its transmission.

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December 7th: Pearl Harbor Day.

On this day in 1941, the Japanese bombed the U.S. Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor, on Oahu island, Hawaii, resulting in the immediate entry of the United States into World War II. Approximately 2400 Americans were killed and another 1300 were injured. 18 ships were hit and 200 aircraft destroyed. Japanese losses were negligible.

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December 10th: Human Rights Day.

Anniversary of the United Nations issuance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on this day in 1948.

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December 12th: Fiesta of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Commemorates the appearance of the virgin Mary to an Indian boy in 1531. Primarily observed in Mexico.

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December 21st: Forefathers' Day.

Anniversary of the landing of the Mayflower at Plymouth in 1620. Day to honor the pioneers who founded this country.

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About December 22nd: Winter Solstice.

Day in winter when the night is longest. Official first day of the winter season. This is a significant holiday to pagans, marking the start of the solar year.

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December 22nd: Start of Capricorn astrological sign.

Capricorn, the goat.

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Late December, early January: Kwanzaa.

A several day festival, typically observed by the review of African American heritage and community values. Created in 1966 by Dr. Maulana Ron

Karenga. This holiday includes a significant number of observed days and traditional objects, which cannot be satisfactorily covered in any depth in this limited space.

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December 25th: Christmas.

Christmas, a Christian holiday, commemorates the birth of Jesus Christ. The date has been observed since the 4th century. Its date was chosen to counter the pagan winter solstice festival, observed on the same date. The Christmas season is observed through generosity, compassion, kindness and well wishing. Traditions include the group singing, festive dinner with family and friends, egg nog, special cookies and a Christmas tree decorated with delicate ornaments and lights. These traditions differ markedly between nations. Legend holds that on Christmas Eve, Santa Claus delivers gifts to all the good children around the world. On Christmas day, gifts are exchanged between family members.

Traditional and Eastern churches observe the twelve days of Advent, from Christmas to Epiphany on January 6.

Christmas Day is a legal holiday.

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First weekday after Christmas: Boxing Day.

Day to give Christmas gifts to service providers such as servants, postal delivery person and trash collector.

Future dates: 1997.12.26, 1998.12.28, 1999.12.27, 2000.12.26, 2001.12.26.

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December 31st: New Year's Eve.

Last day of the year. Typically observed with a countdown to midnight, at which time one kisses the nearest person. Celebrations typically include confetti and champagne.

===== ***** Additional items to be added:

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Sports: Baseball Season Hockey Season Basketball Season Football Season

Harvest seasons: fruit vegetables

Add astrological characteristics.

Add detail to some days.

Add Womens History Month.