



# New Year's Day

JANUARY 1

**I**N THE UNITED STATES, people begin celebrating the new year on December 31, New Year's Eve. Many people have parties, and sometimes **masquerade balls**, where guests dress up in costume and cover their faces with masks to hide their identity. According to an old tradition, guests unmask, or remove their masks, at midnight.

Many people enjoy the tradition of watching the New Year's festivities in Times Square in the heart of New York City. This celebration is telecast live on news channels across the nation. Traditionally, at one minute before midnight, a lighted ball begins to drop slowly from the top of a pole that is attached to a building. As the ball drops, all the people in Times Square—and many television viewers as well—count down the final minute of the year. At the **stroke of midnight**, the ball reaches the bottom of the pole, and a huge “Happy New Year” sign lights up. Then Times Square is filled with cheers and noisemakers. Confetti is dropped from windows above, and revelers hug, kiss, and wish each other a “Happy New Year!”

The tradition of counting down the last minute or final seconds of the year is a highlight of New Year's Eve, not only in Times Square, but at parties and **get-togethers** throughout the nation. The excitement grows as **partygoers** watch the clock and count 10! 9! 8! 7!



PREVIOUS PAGE: The air in Times Square, New York City, is filled with confetti on New Year's Eve.

ABOVE: For the Times Square New Year's Eve celebration in the year 2000, the ball had 168 crystal light bulbs, was 6 feet (2 meters) in diameter, and weighed 1070 pounds (486 kilos).

6!...and shout “Happy New Year!!” at exactly midnight, heralding in the new year.

Some towns and cities host a “First Night” celebration, a large community **street party** featuring food, music, and other entertainment. First Night parties provide a safe and, often, **alcohol-free** environment for people of all ages to socialize, celebrate, and “ring in the New Year” together.

At New Year's Eve parties, people often sing a traditional Scottish song, “*Auld Lang Syne*,” just after the clock strikes midnight and the cheers of “Happy New Year” subside. *Auld Lang Syne* was written in the 18th century by the Scottish poet Robert Burns, and may be based on an earlier poem by another Scottish poet. The expression “auld lang syne” means “the old days gone by.”

## New Year's Day

On January first, Americans may relax at home or visit friends, relatives, and neighbors. New Year's Day get-togethers are often informal, but generally there is plenty to eat and drink as loved ones and friends wish each other the best for the year ahead.

Many families and friends watch television together enjoying the **Tournament of Roses Parade**, which precedes the **Rose Bowl** football game—both held in Pasadena, California.

The parade was started in 1890, when Professor Charles F. Holder



suggested to the Pasadena Valley Hunt Club that they **sponsor** a parade to **showcase** the winter beauty and sunshine of the area. The parade was to be “an artistic celebration of the ripening of the oranges” at the beginning of the year. The first parade consisted of decorated, horse-drawn carriages. Motorized **floats** were added a few years later, and prizes were given for the most beautiful floats.

The event grew, and in 1895 the Tournament of Roses Association was formed to **oversee** the festivities. Soon, athletic competitions became part of the day’s events, along with an ostrich race, and once, a race between a camel and an elephant, in which the elephant won!

To **enhance** the event and increase public interest, a **collegiate** football game was added in 1902, with Stanford University playing against the University of Michigan. Today, the New

Year’s Day Rose Bowl game, featuring the two top college football teams in the nation is, for many Americans, the highlight of New Year’s Day.

From year to year, the parade of floats grew longer, and now the procession takes over 2 1/2 hours to travel the 5 1/2-mile parade route through the streets of Pasadena, California. The flower decorations also grew more **elaborate**. Today the floats include high-tech animation, and every inch of the float must be covered with flowers or other natural plant material.

The theme of the Tournament of Roses varies from year to year, and the parade now includes thousands of participants in marching bands, on horseback, and on the floats. City officials and **celebrities** ride in the cars pulling the floats, and a celebrity is chosen to be the grand marshal. The queen of the tournament, along with her court, rides on a special float, which is always the most elaborate, being

ABOVE: According to the regulations, the elaborate floats in the Rose Bowl parade must be covered only in flowers and other natural materials.

made from more than 250,000 flowers. Prizes are still given for the best, most beautiful floats.

Thousands of **spectators** line the parade route, arriving early in the morning or **camping out** overnight in order to secure the best spot for viewing the parade, which begins at 8 a.m. Spectators and participants alike enjoy the **pageantry** associated with the occasion. Preparation for next year's Tournament of Roses begins on January 2.

Watching football games and parades is not the only tradition on New Year's Day. Americans, like people in many countries, also promise to better themselves in the new year. Some Americans even write down their New Year's resolutions—promises to themselves for improvement in the coming year.

### Glossary

**celebrate(ing):** *v.* to observe (recognize) a holiday or other special day with ceremonies, festivities, respect, or rejoicing

**masquerade ball:** *n.* a dance or social gathering of people who are wearing masks or coverings over their eyes or face so as not to be recognized

**festivity (ies):** *n.* a joyous celebration or party

**live:** *adj.* not pre-recorded; broadcast during the actual performance

**stroke of midnight:** *n.* 12:00 a.m. exactly; when the clock shows or chimes 12:00 a.m.

**confetti:** *n.* small bits of colored paper thrown into the air to mark a celebration

**reveler(s):** *n.* a person who is celebrating at a party or other festivity

**get-together(s):** *n.* an informal party or meeting

**partygoer(s):** *n.* a person who attends a party

**herald (ing):** *v.* to welcome or announce, often with ceremony, respect, or celebration

**street party:** *n. phrase*, a celebration held in the street(s) by a neighborhood or community

**alcohol-free:** *adj.* an event in which no alcoholic beverages are sold or allowed

**ring in the new year:** *v.* an expression that means to celebrate and welcome the new year

**tournament:** *n.* a contest involving a number of competitors

**parade:** *n.* a public procession or display of people, animals, and/or things moving in a single line

**Rose Bowl:** *n. phrase.* a special tournament or final championship competition held each year in Pasadena, California between competing American university football (American style) teams

**sponsor:** *v.* to provide financial or official support

**showcase:** *v.* to display prominently in order to show the positive features

**float(s):** *n.* a platform carrying a display, usually pulled by a vehicle in parades

**oversee:** *v.* to direct, supervise, or manage

**enhance:** *v.* to make greater, more beautiful, or to increase in value

**collegiate:** *adj.* referring to college or university

**elaborate:** *adj.* complex, detailed, carried out with care

**celebrity (ies):** *n.* a well-known or famous person

**spectator(s):** *n.* a person who watches an event but does not actively participate

**camp(ing) out:** *v.* to wait in line a very long time, even overnight, for an event or to buy a ticket; people bring sleeping bags, food, drinks, extra clothes, music, books, etc., to keep them comfortable while they wait in line

**pageantry:** *n.* formal parades and plays related to an event