

# How did the months get their names? (worksheet)

## Activity 1

Look at the pictures. What can you see?

What do the pictures have in common?

What do they represent represent?



What does a modern calendar look like?

What kind of calendar do you use?

Have you bought a calendar for 2018? What does it look like?

Picture taken from <https://images.google.com/>

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## Activity 2

Work in pairs. Read and try to solve the riddles.

*... brings sunny days and winds  
So we know that spring begins.*

*... brings flowers, joy and grass  
And the holidays for us.*

*Warm ... brings us school,  
Days are shorter, nights are cool.*

*Cold ... brings us skating,  
For the New Year we are waiting.*

Answer the questions after you guess the answers to the riddles.

What do the answers to the riddles have in common?

Do you know why they are called like this in English?

Do you know where the months in your language took their names from?

How do you think English months got their names?

Can you guess?

Picture taken from <https://images.google.com/>

Riddles taken from <http://www.learnenglishbest.com/english-riddles-about-months.html>

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### Activity 3

Read the text and check your predictions. How did the months get their names?

#### How did the months get their names?

As the new year starts you might have recently bought a new diary or calendar and thought 'Where do these words come from?' – at least that's what I did. There is also, of course, the chance that you have been trying to schedule gym appointments and book clubs and all sorts of other details relating to New Year's resolutions (have you kept yours so far?) but we'll take the opportunity to add a resolution to your list: learn where we got the names for all the months of the year. Spoilers: it's a mixture of gods, rulers, and numbers.

#### January

January is named after the Roman god Janus, who was the god of doors and beginnings – appropriately enough, for the beginning of the year (though this is, as you will discover, not as straightforward as it seems). Indeed, Janus was usually depicted with two faces looking backwards and forwards, as is often characteristic of a new year; this also gave rise to the term Janus word for words that have two opposite meanings.

#### February

February is ultimately based on Latin februius, from februa. In case that's not helped things become clearer, februa was the name of a purification feast held on the 15th of this month. February is a **divisive issue** in modern pronunciation, with both Feb-yoo-ary and Feb-roo-ary being commonly heard.

#### March

Which god gets a planet and a month named after him? You've guessed it: Mars. Why him? As the Oxford English Dictionary notes, 'In ancient Rome several festivals of Mars took place in March, **presumably** in preparation for the **campaigning** season, since Mars was a god of war.'

#### April

We know that the English word April comes from the Latin Aprillis, the fourth month of the ancient Roman calendar, but things are less clear after that. In Old English, April was also sometimes called Eastermonab, 'Easter month'.

#### May

The month is connected with the goddess Maia. Perhaps less well known now than the other **deities** with months named after them, Maia (in Greek mythology) was daughter of Atlas and mother of Hermes. She was considered a **nurturer** and an earth goddess, which may explain the connection with this springtime month. Although may is a common modal verb, the month and the word are unrelated.

#### June

Having conceded one month to a Greek **deity**, we're now back with the Romans: June is named after the ancient Roman goddess Juno, wife of Jupiter and goddess of marriage and childbirth. June was also once sometimes known as midsummer month.

#### July

The first month in the calendar named after a real person, July was named in honour of Julius Caesar after his death in 44 BC, July being the month of his birth. Before it was renamed, the month was known as Quintilis (borrowed into English as Quintile), which means 'fifth'. If you've been counting, you'll know that July isn't the fifth month: we'll come on to that when we reach September and October.

**August**

Following the pattern, in 8 BC, the month Sextilis ('sixth') was renamed after Augustus, the first Roman emperor, who had died six years earlier. Augustus himself was given this title when he became emperor, having previously been known as Octavian. It came from the Latin *augustus* meaning 'highly respected' which gave rise to the English adjective *august*, 'respected and impressive'.

**September**

September follows on from Quintilis and Sextilis, in that it comes from the Latin *septem*, 'seven'. As with those (and the rest of the calendar), the numbering is a bit off now: September was originally the seventh month in an ancient Roman ten-month calendar, which started with March.

**October**

More of the same: *octo* is the Latin for 'eight', for that ten-month calendar. Two months were added to the end of the calendar year around 713 BC, and the beginning of the year was moved to 1 January in 153 BC.

**November**

The pattern continues: November comes from *novem*, 'nine'. November is also, we're afraid, used 'with allusion to November's position at the end of the year, and to the characteristic greyness, gloominess, etc., associated with it in the northern hemisphere'. The earliest known example of this allusive use comes from Jane Austen's novel *Persuasion*, which was published after her death.

**December**

And we finish off the year with December, from *decem*, 'ten'. The month also comes with a brace of adjectives: *Decemberish* and *Decemberly*, the latter of which can also be used as an adverb. And there you have it: a whole calendar year of etymologies to see you through the whole of 2016.

## Activity 4

Go around the class and ask questions to people from other groups in order to complete the chart.

<i>Month</i>	<i>Origin</i>	<i>Month</i>	<i>Origin</i>	<i>Month</i>	<i>Origin</i>
January		May		September	
February		June		October	
March		July		November	
April		August		December	

Text adjusted from <https://blog.oxforddictionaries.com/2016/01/11/months-names/>

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## Activity 5

Look at the **highlighted** words in the text. Do you know what they mean?  
Try to match them with their definitions. Use the text to help you..

1. divisive issue		a. you say this when you believe something is true, but you are not sure 100%
2. campaign		b. a god or goddess
3. presumably		c. someone who provides food or care
4. deity		d. great and sometimes unfriendly disagreement within a group of people
5. nurturer		e. a planned group military activities to achieve a particular goal

## Activity 6

Read the text again and find answers to these questions.

1. Why does the author mention 'resolutions' in the introduction?
2. What do we find out about a Roman god Janus?
3. What is the divisive issue about February?
4. What does the 'compaigning season' mean?
5. What was the name of April in Old English? Why?
6. Who is Maia?
7. Does the month 'May' have anything to do with a modal verb 'may'?
8. What 2 things do we learn about June?
9. What was the original name of the month July? Why?
10. What did 'August' originate from?
11. What else was named after Augustus?
12. Why September was the seventh month?
13. What was November associated with?
14. What are the derivatives from 'December' and what do they mean?

### Activity 7

Have you made any New Year resolutions? Do you have plans for this year?  
Complete the chart with plans. Use *will*, *going to* or *Present Continuous*.

#### **NB!**

Use **Present Continuous** if you are 90-100% sure about your plans  
Use **going to** if you are more or less sure, but you don't have the details yet  
Use **will** if you do not have the plans yet, but you might do it

<i>Month</i>	<i>My plans</i>	<i>Fellow student's plans</i>
January		
February		
March		
April		
May		
June		
July		
August		
September		
October		
November		
December		