Cultural Calendar

Goal: Make a calendar for a month in another country or historical period

Before beginning

Decide on a culture for the calendar theme.

Easy. Choose a country that uses the same numerals the US, such as Brazil or Russia.

Medium. Choose a country with numerals different from the US, such as India or China.

Hard. Choose an ancient civilization that used a number system different from ours, such as the Maya or Babylonians.

Explore calendars and numbers

Distribute the resources you’ve gathered. Give children a couple of minutes to look them over with a partner.

Talk About…

How are the calendars different from ours? How are they similar?
2 Make your own calendar

Ask children to imagine they live in the chosen country or historical period. What month would it be now? What year?

Distribute calendar templates. Children add:

- Name of the month and days of the week in the language of the country, if relevant
- Numerals
- Holidays, seasons, and phases of the moon (optional)

**Talk About…**

*What patterns do you see on your calendar? How are the numerals you used different from ours?*

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**Variations**

Add number words from the language of the country to the calendar. What patterns do you see? Is there a “-teen”? a “twenty-”?
Calendar Patterns

Early elementary grades: Find patterns in numbers, days, and months

Once children have filled in the numbers on their calendars, they can look for number patterns.

Look down the row of Wednesdays. How do the numbers change? What about as you go from Friday to Friday? If the 6th is a Monday, what’s the date on Wednesday? How do you know?

Middle elementary grades: Compare calendars from different cultures

What’s the same about our calendar and Mexico’s? What’s different?

Weeks have seven days in the US and Mexico, but the words for the days differ. Some holidays also differ. The US observes Labor Day in September, while many other countries celebrate workers on May 1. Winter begins in December in the Northern Hemisphere. It begins in June in the Southern Hemisphere.
Upper elementary grades: Investigate different number systems

Numerals different from the usual 1, 2, 3... appear on calendars from India, China, Israel, and many Arabic countries. The ancient Roman, Egyptian, Babylonian, and Mayan civilizations had their own number systems.

Once children have written the numerals from a different system on their calendars, ask what they notice.

Is the number for “10” the first two-digit number? Is there a number for 0? What are some ways that the numbers are similar to ours?