

English articles

It's useful to read articles in English, even if you don't understand every word - it will help you increase your vocabulary and keep up to date with things happening in English-speaking countries!

*This page will be updated on **Mondays**. The first article is aimed at a B1 and upwards level and the second article is aimed at a B2 and upwards level*

Articles of the week



April Fools' Day is celebrated with pranks and hoaxes worldwide



By HALLIE GOLDEN Associated Press

From France to Iceland to the United States, April Fools' Day will be celebrated on Tuesday with practical jokes and elaborate hoaxes, so make sure to triple check viral posts and don't leave your

back open to any stray sticky notes.

The jokesters' custom has been around for hundreds of years, although its exact birth is difficult to pinpoint. These days, depending on your location, it could be marked with a fish secretly pinned to someone's back or a whoopee cushion or even news reports of flying penguins (yes, that actually happened).

In the U.S., the pranks are typically followed by screams of "April Fools!" to make sure all are aware that they were the unsuspecting recipient of a practical joke.

Here are some thing to know about April Fools' Day and its history:

Where did April Fools' Day come from?

There are plenty of theories about where this day of pranks and hoaxes came from. It's not clear exactly which one might be true. But what is clear is that April Fools' Day has roots stretching back hundreds of years.

One idea is that it dates back to France in 1564, when King Charles IX moved the New Year celebration from its weeklong observance beginning March 25 to a celebration on Jan. 1, according to the Library of Congress. Those who forgot or were never told about the change were mocked. Although the library notes that the true history of the New Year is more complicated, as different parts of the country observed it on different days.

A similar theory ties April Fools' Day to the 1582 change from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar, according to the library. But it explains that this type of origin story has been used to explain several holidays and may be more of a "migratory legend."

And then there's the theory that it could be connected to the March 21 vernal equinox, which is known as a day when people are tricked by unexpected weather changes, according to Encyclopedia Britannica.

Whatever its origin, the first time there was clear documented reference to the day was in 1561 when the Flemish writer Eduard De Dene wrote in his poem about a nobleman sending his servant on pointless tasks, according to the Library of Congress. The servant soon realizes that he has been "sent on 'fool's errands' because it's April 1," the library states.

What are some of the most famous April Fools' Day pranks?

In 2021, then-first lady Jill Biden pretended to be a flight attendant on an airplane traveling from California to Washington. She wore a "Jasmine" nametag and passed out Dove ice cream bars while wearing a black mask, black pantsuit and wig. A few minutes later, "Jasmine" reemerged without the wig — revealing herself to be Jill Biden, laughing and proclaiming, "April Fools!"

Google co-founders Larry Page and Sergey Brin became known for announcing outlandish ideas every April Fools' Day soon after starting their company more than a quarter century ago. One year, Google posted a job opening for a Copernicus research center on the moon. Another year, the company said it planned to roll out a "scratch and sniff" feature on its search engine.

In 1992, NPR 's "Talk of the Nation" program announced that former-President Richard Nixon, who resigned in 1974, would be running for president, according to the Museum of Hoaxes. A comedian had impersonated Nixon to say, "I never did anything wrong, and I won't do it again."

Outside of the U.S., one of the most notable pranks involved the BBC World Service in 1980 declaring that Big Ben would become a digital clock and renamed Digital Dave, according to the UK Parliament.

How is April Fools' Day celebrated around the world?

From Scotland to Iceland to the U.S., the day is honored in a wide array of ways.

In France, the day is known as poisson d'avril, or "April Fish," and has long had a fish-themed pranking tradition. In modern times, it's become more of a day for children to relish in attaching paper fish to their friends' backs, Atlas Obscura says.

In Scotland, April Fools' has a history of being a two-day event. April 1 is known as "Gowkie Day" or "Hunt the Gowk," explained Encyclopedia Britannica. Gowk is a term used to describe a fool. On April 2, the celebration may become more physical, with children attaching "kick me" signs to people's backs.

The day is also celebrated in Iceland, with the aim being to get people to "hlaupa apríl," or "make an April run." In other words, to trick someone in a way that makes them travel to a different location. News agencies have also been known to participate in pranking people. In 2014, for example, Iceland Review ran a story with the headline, "Google Signs Deal with Iceland," saying the fake news was part of "a long-standing tradition of the Icelandic media."

In the rapidly shifting world of work, many employees are unclear what's expected of them



By CATHY BUSSEWITZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — When Nikelle Inman started a new job coaching first-generation college students, she looked forward to meeting with them one-on-one to talk about how to surmount obstacles and find resources to succeed.

Instead, she and her fellow success coaches at a community college in North Carolina spent a year mired in paperwork, tasked with reviewing applications from aspiring undergraduates. They never did get to meet with students.

"Admissions work kind of took over what we were supposed to do," Inman, 34, said. "I felt disengaged with the position, more so because I just didn't feel valued."

It's disorienting when a job turns out to be completely different than advertised or morphs into something we didn't expect. But more U.S. workers have reported feeling disconnected from their organization's purpose and unclear on how to meet expectations since the coronavirus pandemic changed the way we work, according to a new Gallup analysis.

Just under half of U.S. employees who participated in a Gallup survey in November “strongly agreed” that they know what is expected of them at work, which is one of the factors the polling firm uses to measure employee engagement. In January 2020, the figure stood at 56%.

The new survey showed that new employees, younger employees, people in white-collar industries like technology, insurance and finance, and those in hybrid work arrangements were especially likely to report that expectations for their roles weren't clear.

The findings make intuitive sense. Managers and employees have bushwhacked their way through disruptive changes since COVID-19 first upended public life five years ago. In late 2024, about one-quarter of employees with the ability to work remotely were doing so exclusively, up from around 1 in 10 in 2019, Gallup found. Another 55% were working in the office some days and remotely the rest, according to the 2024 data, up from about one-third in 2019.

More recently, layoffs at tech companies and in the government and other sectors have left organizations with fewer people to handle the load, and expectations aren't always adjusted to the new realities.

“With all the rounds of layoffs, people's scope and responsibilities are shifting constantly,” said Jeremy Guttentplan, an executive leadership trainer and coach based in New York. “You think about the ones left behind and the work is just getting piled on them.”

Here are some strategies for eliminating confusion when the scope and responsibilities of a job are ambiguous.

Establish expectations early

Spell out or make sure you understand what a new role or project entails — along with any relevant deadlines or performance markers — from the beginning so everyone agrees on what's realistic and wanted. Writing it down in a shared document can help prevent future misunderstandings.

When a successful real estate developer asked Amber Krasinski to film and produce 85 TikTok videos in three hours, she thought hard about whether she really wanted to take him on as a client. The job might be good exposure for her communications agency, IvyHill Strategies, but Krasinski knew it would be impossible to complete in so little time. She turned it down.

Krasinski regularly gives her client progress updates and tries to make a practice of asking clarifying questions before taking on new projects.

“Any time I have a conversation with a prospective client, I have that in the back of my mind,” Krasinski said. “Avoiding that people-pleasing side that says, 'You can figure it out, you can do it.' You don't want to let anybody down, but you also need to set yourself up for success.”

Seek frequent feedback

No one wants to spend all day in meetings. But more frequent check-ins with a manager or supervisor may help staff members who are unsure if they are prioritizing their time appropriately or don't know what they are supposed to be doing.

Organizations can explore different ways of building connection between employees and providing more opportunities for feedback, which can result in better understanding of workplace expectations. Brian Smith, founder and managing partner of IA Business Advisors, said his company hosts gratitude sessions for 30 minutes each week.

The first 20 minutes are led by a coach who advises attendees on issues such as how to effectively manage time or deal with challenging customers. Highlighting specific problems and strategies can help workers understand what's expected of them. At the end of the session, participants have an opportunity to share what they're grateful for.

Start the conversation

Workers don't have to wait for a supervisor to seek feedback or clarify expectations. You can suggest a quick check-in at any point, if you're unsure how to prioritize long-term goals or short-term deadlines,

"Managing upwards is going to make your life easier," said Dale Whelehan, founder of 4 Day World, a think tank that explores new models of work. "Don't assume that management has all the answers. They're probably just as lost."

However, in hierarchical organizations where questioning management may be viewed negatively, it's important to be delicate, he said.

To initiate a feedback discussion, you can ask to meet with a manager about a current project. Whelehan outlined how to approach the conversation if the meeting gets scheduled. Start by sharing what you understand your assignment to be. Then request the manager's confirmation or clarification by saying something such as, "I just want to make sure that there's alignment here," he advised.

Ask about anything else you need to clarify and close out the conversation by saying, "From what I understand from this conversation, my role is this. ... Have I understood that correctly?" Follow up with an email restating what you agreed to, Whelehan said.

Trust your instincts

With workplaces experiencing so many changes, employees can find themselves jumping from one assignment to the other, distracted by new responsibilities picked up after colleagues were laid off, or adjusting to spending more time physically in the office.

If it all feels too chaotic, take a moment to pause. Revisit your priorities. And then work on the most important task.

"If something doesn't feel right, don't just accept it," Inman said. "Whatever that avenue is, if it's staying and trying to make it better or leaving, just don't give up on what you know is right."

Have you overcome an obstacle or made a profound change in your work? Send your questions and story ideas to cbussewitz@ap.org. Follow AP's Be Well coverage, focusing on wellness, fitness, diet and mental health at <https://apnews.com/hub/be-well>.

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