

Fool your friends on April first

History of April Fools' Day

The origin of this holiday is rather uncertain. However, the common belief holds that during the reformation of the calendar the date for the New Year was moved from April 1 to January 1st. During that time in history there was no television and no radio so word spread slowly. There were also those who chose to simply ignore the change and those who merely forgot. These people were considered "fools" and invitations to non-existent parties and other practical jokes were played on them. "All Fools' Day" is practiced in many parts of the world with practical jokes and sending people on a fool's errand.

Another thought is that the origin began with the celebrations of the Spring Equinox. While some believe it has to do with a Roman festival known as Hilaria, the end of the Celtic new year.

In Scotland, April Fools' Day lasts 48 hours; day two is known as Taily Day and pranks involving the posterior are played. The victim of the practical joke is referred to as "hunting the gowk" (the gowk is an extinct cuckoo bird.)

In France, the day is the "poisson d'Avril" or "fish of April." The fish in April are newly hatched and easily caught. French children enjoy taping a picture of a fish on their friends back and yelling out "Poisson d'Avril!" when it is found.

Día de los Santos Inocentes is held in Spain on December 28. This is The Feast of the Holy Innocents. It's celebrated similarly to April Fools' Day with practical jokes.

In the United States, pranks are played on just about everybody. Pranks range from the standard "Your shoe is untied," to some very creative and elaborate ideas. The only "rule" is that no one should be harmed. The best jokes are when everybody, including the victim, laughs.

*The first of April, some do say,
Is set apart for All Fools' Day.
But why the people call it so,
Nor I, nor they themselves do know.
But on this day are people sent
On purpose for pure merriment.*
-- Poor Robin's Almanac (1790)

Prank ideas

Do pranks at your own risk

Rigged door prank

Place clear tape across the outside of a door from top to bottom. Frequently people will run into it, especially if they are in a hurry.

Showering pranks

Fill the shower head with dry temper paint, onion salt, Easter egg pellets or the like. Lifesavers are great since they dissolve and then re-form on the victim. The victim will feel sticky afterwards and of course the solution to that is to take another shower.

Swipe a person's clothes while they are showering. Put them in an embarrassing place, such as the showers for people of the opposite sex.

Toilet pranks

Place clear cellophane over the toilet bowl but under the seat. Works best at parties where a large percentage of the people are drunk.

Place vaseline (or some other reasonably clear gel) on the seat at night. Listen for the screams. ICY-HOT or Atomic Balm are even better. Also put the stuff on the toilet paper.

Dorm room pranks

Place raw eggs under the person's pillow or comforter or somewhere else that is bulky enough that the eggs won't be noticed until after they have been crushed. This is lots of fun to clean up after.

Fill a person's room while they are out with massive quantities of crumpled up newspaper. This takes a fair bit of planning, a lot of paper and a small room but can have good results.

Body prank

Write all sorts of nasty messages in permanent marker on a person's body while they are asleep or passed out drunk. Put them in hard to cover up places.

Phone pranks

Coat the receiver of someone's phone with shoe polish and then give them a call. Instant gratification. Make sure you match the colors of the polish and the phone. Small amounts of shaving cream work, too. Glue the victim's receiver down, and then start making lots of calls to the victim.

For more information about different pranks to pull go to: www.student.uit.no/~paalde/revange/Scripts/X/Pranks30.html.

Top 5 April Fool hoaxes

#1: The Swiss Spaghetti Harvest

In 1957, the respected BBC news show Panorama announced that thanks to a very mild winter and the virtual elimination of the dreaded spaghetti weevil, Swiss farmers were enjoying a bumper spaghetti crop. It accompanied this announcement with footage of Swiss peasants pulling strands of spaghetti down from trees. Huge numbers of viewers were taken in, and many called up wanting to know how they could grow their own spaghetti trees. To this question, the BBC diplomatically replied that they should "place a sprig of spaghetti in a tin of tomato sauce and hope for the best." Check out the actual broadcast archived on the BBC's Web Site (You need the RealVideo player installed to see it, and it usually loads very slowly).

#2: Sidd Finch

In its April 1985 edition, Sports Illustrated published a story about a new rookie pitcher who planned to play for the Mets. His name was Sidd Finch and he could reportedly throw a baseball with startling, pinpoint accuracy at 168 mph (65 mph faster than anyone else has ever been able to throw a ball). Surprisingly, Sidd Finch had never even played the game before. Instead, he had mastered the "art of the pitch" in a Tibetan monastery under the guidance of the "great poet-saint Lama Milaraspa." Mets fans everywhere celebrated at their team's amazing luck at having found such a gifted player, and Sports Illustrated was flooded with requests for more information. But in reality this legendary player only existed in the imagination of the writer of the article, George Plimpton.

#3: Instant Color TV

In 1962, there was only one TV channel in Sweden, and it broadcast in black and white. The station's technical expert, Kjell Stensson, appeared on the news to announce that thanks to a newly developed technology, all viewers could now quickly and easily convert their existing sets to display color reception. All they had to do was pull a nylon stocking over their TV screen, and they would begin to see their favorite shows in color. Stensson then proceeded to demonstrate the process. Reportedly, hundreds of thousands of people, out of the population of 7 million, were taken in. Actual color TV transmission only commenced in Sweden on April 1, 1970.

#4: The Taco Liberty Bell

In 1996, the Taco Bell Corporation announced that it had bought the Liberty Bell from the federal government and was renaming it the Taco Liberty Bell. Hundreds of outraged citizens called up the National Historic Park in Philadelphia, where the bell is housed, to express their anger. Their nerves were only calmed when Taco Bell revealed that it was all a practical joke a few hours later. The best line inspired by the affair came when then-White House Press Secretary Mike McCurry was asked about the sale, and he responded that the Lincoln Memorial had also been sold, though to a different corporation, and would now be known as the Ford Lincoln Mercury Memorial.

#5: San Serriffe

In 1977, the British newspaper The Guardian published a special seven-page supplement in honor of the 10th anniversary of San Serriffe, a small republic located in the Indian Ocean consisting of several semi-colon-shaped islands. A series of articles affectionately described the geography and culture of this obscure nation. Its two main islands were named Upper Caisse and Lower Caisse. Its capital was Bodoni, and its leader was General Pica. The Guardian's phones rang all day as readers sought more information about the idyllic holiday spot. Few noticed that everything about the island was named after printer's terminology. The success of this hoax is widely credited with launching the enthusiasm for April Foolery that then gripped the British tabloids in the following decades.

Sources:
www.museumofhoaxes.com/aprilfool/
www.web-holidays.com/fools/

True or April Fool

1: Don't disturb the squirrels

In 1993, city officials in Cologne, Germany, imposed a new regulation on people jogging through the city park. Runners were required to pace themselves to go no faster than 6 mph. Any faster, the city officials cautioned, could disturb the squirrels who were in the middle of their mating season.

2: Corporate tattoos

The Pepsi-Cola Company, in search of more innovative ways to reach out to young consumers, once experimented with offering teenagers an intriguing deal. The company sponsored teenagers to tattoo themselves with its corporate logo. In return for permanently branding themselves, the teenagers received a lifetime 10 percent discount on the company's products. Teenagers were said to have responded enthusiastically to the offer.

3: Crustless bread

For those who just can't stand the taste of crusts and are too lazy to cut them off themselves, Sara Lee introduced in 2002 the ultimate in convenience: crustless bread. Available in stores everywhere!

4: Pet tax

The city of Philadelphia, faced with a looming budget shortfall, last year announced a new tax targeted at pet owners. The owners will be charged a base fee of \$10 per pet, and then \$1 extra for every additional pound the pet weighs over 10 pounds. Failure to pay the tax could result in the euthanization of the pet.

5: Chicken manure-powered electrical plant

In 1991, Mitsubishi Bank contacted venture capitalists about an exciting new investment opportunity: Fibropower, a 14-megawatt generating plant fueled entirely by chicken poop. Finally, the investment prospectus boasted, a way to put unwanted chicken manure to good use. Suggestions that this was a chickens'*t idea were ignored.

6: Prehistoric penguin murals

In 1991, prehistoric murals were discovered on the walls of an underwater cave in eastern France, revealing that penguins and man once lived side-by-side in that region. Historians, accustomed to seeing prehistoric depictions of animals such as bison and deer, were extremely surprised to find the penguins.

7: Alabama changes value of pi

In 1998, the Alabama state legislature voted to change the value of the mathematical constant pi from 3.14159 to the Biblical value of 3.0. NASA engineers in Huntsville, Alabama, were reportedly disturbed by the decision.

8: Vodka bars

Recently, a Russian beverage company announced a new product designed to appeal more specifically to Russian tastes: chewy Vodka bars. The company hopes the candy bars will compete successfully against popular Western imports such as Mars and Snickers bars. The Vodka bars will be available in lemon, coconut and salted cucumber flavors.

9: Bank teller fees

In 1999, a Connecticut-based bank announced that due to rising costs it would be forced to charge a \$5 fee every time a customer visited a live teller. The bank promised that the fee would actually help to improve the quality of customer service.

10: Purple carrots

For those yearning to add a colorful splash to their meals, a British supermarket announced last year that it will soon be selling purple carrots. The store hopes that the new offering will appeal to fickle children who have grown bored by the orange variety.

11: Karate experts collect bus fares

Faced with a growing number of unruly passengers, one town in Ukraine recently adopted a unique solution: Karate-trained fare collectors. The number of passengers trying to ride without paying was said to be down sharply ever since the new collectors were introduced.

12: Operation fake tourist

Convinced that word of mouth is the best form of advertising, Sony announced last year that it will hire actors to use the company's new camera at major tourist attractions. While posing as tourists, the actors will ask random passers-by to take their picture with the Sony camera. Once a passer-by agrees, the actors then begin to speak effusively about the features of the camera.

Answers: 1. April Fool 2. True 3. True 4. April Fool 5. True 6. True 7. April Fool 8. April Fool 9. April Fool 10. True 11. True 12. True

"The first of April is the day we remember what we are the other 364 days of the year."

- Mark Twain