

Activity 1: New Year Celebrations

Level:

CEFR B1

Time:

60-90 minutes

Resources:

- ▶ Handouts
- ▶ Answer sheets from Trinity website

Aims:

- ▶ To be able to speak and read confidently about customs and traditions
- ▶ To raise learners' awareness of the requirements of Task 1 of the Entry 3 Reading exam
- ▶ To feel confident in understanding how paragraphs work

Exam task focus: Task 1

Procedure

1. Tell learners they are going to talk about New Year celebrations and practise Task 1 of the Reading.
2. Set the context. Tell learners what you did yourself last New Year (it doesn't matter if you did nothing other than go to bed at 9pm with a cup of cocoa and a good murder mystery. It just needs to start the discussion going). Encourage a few learners to share what they did with the rest of the class. Hopefully there will be quite a variety of answers demonstrating the wide range of ways this time of year can be marked.
3. Give each learner a copy of Handout activity 1. They need to try and match the customs to the country – encourage them to wander around the class to see if anyone else knows the answers. Go through the answers together as a class when you think most learners have as many answers as they can.

Answers:

In Spain, people eat twelve grapes at midnight for good luck.

In Brazil, people wear white clothes on New Year's Eve to bring peace.

In Denmark, people throw old plates at their friends' doors to show affection.

In the Philippines, people eat round fruits to attract wealth in the new year.

In Colombia, people carry empty suitcases around the block to bring travel opportunities.

In Japan, people ring a bell 108 times to cleanse themselves of bad thoughts.

In Italy, people wear red underwear on New Year's Eve to bring good luck.

In Greece, people hang an onion on their front door for good health in the new year.

In Ecuador, people burn paper dolls to get rid of the bad things from the past year.

In Switzerland, people drop ice cream on the floor to bring prosperity.

4. Give the learners five minutes to prepare to talk about traditional New Year's Eve customs in their culture, or in a country they know well. Let them make notes and look up vocabulary so they feel confident to explain.
5. Put learners in groups of three. This activity will work much better if you can group people from different countries together. Ask the learners to share with their group what people tend to do in the country or culture they are from to mark the New Year. If their country was part of the exercise above, encourage them to say more about that custom – is it true? Do they practice this tradition themselves? Can they say more about it? Are there any more traditions in their culture apart from this?

After 10 minutes or so, ask one person from each group to summarise the most surprising customs.

6. Now give each learner a copy of Handout activity 2a. Explain that here we have 10 short paragraphs that are missing their first sentence. The (completed) sentences from Handout 1 are the missing sentences. Ask them to match these, working on their own this time.
7. Compare answers as a class, noting the ways that the paragraph matched up by repeating references to the topic sentence, but using different words to say the same thing. In the case of Italy and Brazil, you needed to pay special attention to the words 'pale' and 'bright' to decide which colour each paragraph referred to, and both Spain and Japan make reference to bells, but there are clearly not 108 months in a year so this can also be worked out with careful thought. Handout activity 2B is just an answer sheet for their own reference.
8. Using Handout activity 3, get each learner to write their own paragraph on customs from their own country or culture using the traditions from the earlier activity. They should try and follow the same format as above, with a topic sentence that summarises the custom in one sentence, and then two or three sentences explaining more about this idea. Encourage them to refer to their topic sentence using different words or phrases that essentially mean the same thing. Walk around the class to see how they're getting on – try and check each learner's final paragraph if you can (or collect them in at the end if you don't have time).
9. Finally, give out Handout activity 4, which is similar to Task 1 of the exam. Make sure to print off a sample Answer sheet from the Trinity website to make sure they get used to using it: (<https://www.trinitycollege.com/qualifications/english-language/ESOL-skills-for-life/ESOL-Skills-for-Life-Entry-level-3-resources/reading>). Explain that it's very important that they transfer their answers onto this sheet, or their exam cannot be marked. Consider giving them a time limit to complete this task on their own (the time would probably vary depending on how close the exam is, but remember they only have one hour to complete all three tasks on the actual exam).

Answers:

1. D
2. E
3. B
4. C
5. B
6. A
7. B
8. A

9. B

10. Focus learners' attention on the exam box at the bottom of the handout to explain how the lesson has helped to prepare them for Task 1 of the Trinity Entry 3 Skills for Life Reading exam.

Notes on cultural awareness and appropriacy

Not all cultures celebrate New Year at the same time of year. Make sure this is acknowledged early on in the discussion to avoid any potential confusion in your groups.

Handout activity 1

Match the country from the list at the bottom with the New Year custom in the sentences. Walk around the class to exchange ideas.

In _____, people eat twelve grapes at midnight for good luck.

In _____, people wear white clothes on New Year's Eve to bring peace.

In _____, people throw old plates at their friends' doors to show affection.

In _____, people eat round fruits to attract wealth in the new year.

In _____, people carry empty suitcases around the block to bring travel opportunities.

In _____, people ring a bell 108 times to cleanse themselves of bad thoughts.

In _____, people wear red underwear on New Year's Eve to bring good luck.

In _____, people hang an onion on their front door for good health in the new year.

In _____, people burn paper dolls to get rid of the bad things from the past year.

In _____, people drop ice cream on the floor to bring prosperity.

List of countries:

Ecuador	Brazil	Denmark
Colombia	Greece	Spain
Japan	The Philippines	
Italy	Switzerland	

Handout activity 2a

Use one of the completed sentences from Handout Activity 1 to fill the missing gap in each of the following paragraphs:

In _____, people _____. Each one represents a month of the year. If you can eat all of the fruit before the last bell chimes, it means you will have a lucky year.

In _____, people _____. The pale colour is seen as a symbol of purity and peace. Many people also go to the beach and jump over seven waves, making a wish for each wave.

In _____, people _____. The more broken crockery you find at your door, the more friends you have. This tradition is believed to bring good luck.

In _____, people _____. Circular shapes are thought to symbolise coins and prosperity. Families prepare a table full of different circle-shaped fruits like oranges, grapes, and melons. The more you have, the more wealth you are believed to receive.

In _____, people _____. This custom is for those who wish to travel in the coming year. Walking with the bag symbolises the hope for new adventures.

In _____, people _____. This represents the number of human desires that cause suffering. By doing this, people believe they can start the new year with a pure heart. This tradition is usually done at temples, with many people participating.

In _____, people _____. This bright colour symbolises love, fertility, and good fortune. The custom is very popular, and people believe it helps to bring happiness and success in the new year.

In _____, people _____. This vegetable is seen as a symbol of growth and rebirth. The next morning, parents often tap their children on the head with it to wake them up. This is thought to bring good health and luck.

In _____, people _____. They are called "año viejo," and represent the old year and any problems or regrets. By setting fire to them, people believe they can start the new year fresh. It is a way to let go of the past.

In _____, people _____. It might seem strange, but this custom is believed to bring good fortune in the new year. By letting the frozen dessert hit the ground, they hope for an abundance of wealth and success. It's a sweet start to the year.

Handout activity 2b

ANSWERS

In Spain, people eat twelve grapes at midnight for good luck. Each one represents a month of the year. If you can eat all of the fruit before the last bell chimes, it means you will have a lucky year.

In Brazil, people wear white clothes on New Year's Eve to bring peace. The pale colour is seen as a symbol of purity and peace. Many people also go to the beach and jump over seven waves, making a wish for each wave.

In Denmark, people throw old plates at their friends' doors to show affection. The more broken crockery you find at your door, the more friends you have. This tradition is believed to bring good luck.

In the Philippines, people eat round fruits to attract wealth in the new year. Circular shapes are thought to symbolise coins and prosperity. Families prepare a table full of different circle-shaped fruits like oranges, grapes, and melons. The more you have, the more wealth you are believed to receive.

In Colombia, people carry empty suitcases around the block to bring travel opportunities. This custom is for those who wish to travel in the coming year. Walking with the bag symbolises the hope for new adventures.

In Japan, people ring a bell 108 times to cleanse themselves of bad thoughts. This represents the number of human desires that cause suffering. By doing this, people believe they can start the new year with a pure heart. This tradition is usually done at temples, with many people participating.

In Italy, people wear red underwear on New Year's Eve to bring good luck. This bright colour symbolises love, fertility, and good fortune. The custom is very popular, and people believe it helps to bring happiness and success in the new year.

In Greece, people hang an onion on their front door for good health in the new year. This vegetable is seen as a symbol of growth and rebirth. The next morning, parents often tap their children on the head with it to wake them up. This is thought to bring good health and luck.

In Ecuador, people burn paper dolls to get rid of the bad things from the past year. They are called "año viejo," and represent the old year and any problems or regrets. By setting fire to them, people believe they can start the new year fresh. It is a way to let go of the past.

In Switzerland, people drop ice cream on the floor to bring prosperity. It might seem strange, but this custom is believed to bring good fortune in the new year. By letting the frozen dessert hit the ground, they hope for an abundance of wealth and success. It's a sweet start to the year.

Handout activity 3

Write a paragraph about your own culture or country that follows the same pattern as you have seen in Activity 2. Start with a general topic sentence that summarises the tradition, then write two or three more sentences giving a few details. Refer to the first sentence using different words if you can.

In _____, people _____.

Handout activity 4

The following text is like Task 1 of the exam. Answer the questions to help you practise for this task. Remember to look at the full paragraph carefully for all of the questions, because there are clues in the whole paragraph to help you answer each question.

Hogmanay: A special New Year celebration

Paragraph one

Hogmanay is a very important celebration in Scotland. It is the Scottish word for New Year's Eve, and it is a time when people say **farewell** to the old year and welcome the new one. Many Scottish people believe that Hogmanay is even more important than Christmas. It is a time for parties, fireworks, and spending time with family and friends.

Paragraph two

..C (Example)... After midnight, the first person to enter a house is said to bring good luck for the year. This person, called the 'first-foot,' usually brings gifts like coal, bread, or a drink. These gifts are meant to bring warmth, food, and **joy** to the home in the coming year.

Paragraph three

.....**1**..... This song, written by the Scottish poet Robert Burns, is sung at midnight to remember old friends and times gone by. People often hold hands and form a circle while singing the song. It is a special moment that brings everyone together.

Paragraph four

.....**2**..... Thousands of people from all over the world come to join in the fun. The streets are **packed** with music, dancing, and fireworks, making it one of the biggest New Year celebrations in the world.

Paragraph five

.....**3**..... For many people, the celebrations continue across both days, including a special dinner of steak pie on New Year's Day. However, for some people, they are simply happy to take both days off to rest after all the festivities.

Questions 1–3

Four sentences are missing from the text on page 2. Look at the following sentences (A–E) and decide which one best fits each gap. There is one sentence you do not need and an example. Circle the letter of your answer **on your answer sheet**.

- A Many people sing songs at different events that can go on for two days.
- B The 1 and 2 of January are official holidays in Scotland.
- C *(Example) One of the most famous Hogmanay traditions is called 'first-footing.'*
- D Another popular tradition during Hogmanay is singing 'Auld Lang Syne.'
- E In Edinburgh, the capital city of Scotland, Hogmanay is celebrated with a huge street party.

Questions 4–6

Choose the letter of the closest meaning for each word. Look at the text carefully to help you decide on the best answer. Circle the letter of your answer **on your answer sheet**.

4. farewell (paragraph one)

- A good fun
- B good luck
- C goodbye

5. joy (paragraph two)

- A surprise
- B happiness
- C worry

6. packed (paragraph four)

- A filled
- B boxed
- C delivered

Questions 7–9

Choose the letter of the best answer and circle it **on your answer sheet**.

7. According to paragraph one, for many Scottish people

- A Christmas is a more important festival than Hogmanay
- B Christmas is a less important festival than Hogmanay
- C Christmas and Hogmanay are as important as each other

8. According to paragraph three, people remember old friends by

- A singing a song
- B making a circle
- C being together

9. According to paragraph five, everybody in Scotland

- A celebrates the Hogmanay holiday by eating steak pie
- B chooses to spend the Hogmanay holidays in different ways
- C enjoys a long rest after the big New Year's Eve parties

Exam hint

In Task 1 of the Entry 3 Skills for Life Reading exam, you need to match the missing sentences to the gaps in the text. If you practise using topic sentences you will perform more strongly in this area.

For Task 1, you need to know:

- ▶ How paragraphs work, and which sentences go where in the text
- ▶ Vocabulary, and how to work out the best meaning if you don't know a word
- ▶ How grammar and punctuation can help you understand the correct meaning