

Thank you, James (Jim) Smith, for sharing this very informative study with us. r.f.

## ABOUT NAMES OF MONTHS AND DAYS

Where and how they originated

Who made up the names for the months and the days of the week?

Best Answer: January was named after Janus, the Roman god of doors, beginnings, sunset and sunrise. He had one face looking forward and one backward (to the new and old years). (Read more here: <http://www.novareinna.com/festive/janus....> )

February this also dates back to Roman times when February 15 was the day the Romans celebrated the festival of forgiveness for sins. It comes from the Latin 'februare' meaning "to purify."  
March was named after Mars, the Roman god of war and was the first month of the old Roman year.

April was originally the Roman month Aprilis, whose name was perhaps derived from 'aperire,' (Latin "to open," as in opening buds and blossoms) or perhaps from Aphrodite, original Greek name of Venus.

May was named after Maia, a Roman goddess, the mother of Mercury by Jupiter, and the daughter of Atlas.

June was named after Juno, the chief Roman goddess.

July originally Quintilis (the fifth month), in 44 BC this month was renamed for Julius Caesar (who was born in Quintilis). Caesar reformed the calendar by adding an extra two months (January and February) to the original ten-month Roman calendar.

August this was formerly Sextilis (sixth month in the Roman calendar) but was re-named in 8 BC for Augustus Caesar. Augustus also took a day from February and added it to this month so that his month would have the same number of days as Caesar's (his adoptive father) ... (Men!)

September originally the seventh month ('septem' is Latin for seven).

October originally the eighth month in the Julian (Roman) calendar ('octo' is Latin for eight). Catholic countries adopted the Gregorian calendar in 1582, skipping 10 days in that October to correct for too many leap years. (See below for more details.)

November the ninth Roman month ('novem' is Latin for nine).

December the Julian (Roman) year's tenth month ('decem' is Latin for ten).

Caesar developed a new calendar of 364 1/4 days, which is roughly the time it takes the earth to go around the sun from the beginning of spring to the beginning of spring the following year. Caesar's calendar was normally 365 days long but included an extra day (a leap day) every four years to account for the extra one-quarter of a day. This intercalary day was added prior to February 25 each year.

However, you know what they say about the best laid plans of mice and men ... Unfortunately, Caesar's calendar wasn't quite accurate enough because the year is not 365 days and 6 hours (365.25 days), but is 365 days 5 hours 48 minutes, and 46 seconds (365.242199 days). So his calendar was 11 minutes and 14 seconds too slow. Now that wasn't too much of a worry - especially in the days before you had to know the time so you could set your VCR, but over a long period it made a difference. In fact it added up to be a complete day every 128 years.

So in 1582, by Pope Gregory XIII consulted his astronomers and they came up with a reform that added an intercalary day every four years (moved to after February 28 to make things easier). It just shows how smart these blokes were when you hear what they did next ...

Because this still wasn't exactly right, they declared that there would be no leap year in years ending in 00 - unless those years were divisible by 400. So the years 1700, 1800, 1900, and 2100 would not be leap years, but the years 1600 and 2000 would. This change was so accurate that today, scientists need only add leap seconds every few years to the clock in order to keep the calendar matching the tropical year. Not bad for a bit of star-gazing, a few charts and a quill dipped in ink, eh?

But back to the Romans ... their monthly calendar was originally based on the first three phases of the moon. The new moon was the day of the Kalends, the moon's first quarter was the day of the Nones, and the Ides fell on the day of the full moon. The Kalends' section of the month was the longest, since it spanned two lunar phases, from the full to the new moon. The Romans had an interesting way of counting the days in each month. Instead of starting from 1 and counting up, the usually eminently practical and sensible Romans had a real bad-hair day and came up with a decidedly weird system. They organised the months around these three days, and then counted ... wait for it ... backwards from the three fixed points.

Kalends 1st day of the month. (Kalendrium is the Latin for "account book" and Kalend, the first of the month, was the same in Roman times as it is now, the date on which the bills were due.

Nones the 7th day in March, May, July, and October; the 5th in the other months.

Ides the 15th day in March, May, July, and October; the 13th in the other months.

So February 7 would be VII Ides ... 7 days before the Ides (the Roman method of counting days was inclusive; in other words, the Ides would be counted as one of the 7 days).

So now you know where the months got their names ... but what about those days? Talk about weird words ... and wonderful theories. Here's a fascinating little conversation filler for you:

"The Latin names of the Planets were simple translations of the Greek names, which in turn were translations of the Babylonian names, which go back to the Sumerians.

"The Germanic version of the Latin day names has some correspondences and some differences. In English, the 1st, 2nd, and 7th days are still named after the Sun, Moon, and Saturn, respectively. The 6th day, Friday, looks like the name (Fria or Freya) of a Germanic love goddess, which would correspond to Venus (fri-, as in "friend," is a cognate of philein, "to love," in Greek), though the day is also said to be named after the goddess Frigg, who is also a goddess of love, and of the hearth (which would be Vesta rather than Venus in Rome). The 5th day, Thursday, named after Jupiter, who is a thunder god in Latin, is named after a Germanic thunder god, well known as "Thor" in Norse mythology. Tuesday is named after Tiw, a god of law, but also said to be a god of war, which would match up to Mars. Wednesday is named after the king of the gods, who was Wotan in ancient German and Odin in Norse mythology. This has no obvious correspondence to Mercury, though Odin as a god of wisdom might suggest the role of Mercury in association with learning, and in Late Antiquity with esoteric knowledge.

"The curious thing about the Latin names, clearly using the planets, is that the ancient order of the planets, rising from the Earth to the Fixed Stars, can be read off by starting with Monday and jumping every other day for two weeks: Monday (Moon), Wednesday (Mercury), Friday (Venus), Sunday (Sun), Tuesday (Mars), Thursday (Jupiter), and Saturday (Saturn). One is left with the impression that the names were assigned in a kind of code, so that the Sun would come first in the week, but then the true order of the planets could be read off nevertheless. Saturn comes both at the end of the week and at the end of planets. The day that many people consider to be the 1st day of the week, Monday, is the first planet and does begin the sequence of planets. <http://www.friesian.com/week.htm> "

... Doo-doo, doo-doo ... (that's meant to be 'Twilight Zone' music) Spooky, eh? If you missed the origins of the week days, here they are again:

Monday - Monandaeg or Moonday. The moon was worshipped as the wife of the sun, among other things ("daeg" means day).

Tuesday - Tiwsday or Tiwesdaeg. Tyr, god of war

Wednesday - Wodensday or Wodnesdaeg. Norse god Odin, or Wodin. Tyr's father

Thursday - Thorsday or Thunresdaeg. Thor, Norse god of Thunder

Friday - Frigsday or Frigedaeg. Norse goddess Freya. Wife of Odin, mother of Thor. Named a day after her lest she be jealous and work evil upon them

Saturday - Seternesday or Saterdaeg. Norse god Seterne; also the Roman god Saturn who presided over the sowing of the seed. His festival was Saturnalia, December 17. Because of the wildness of the revels during the festival the name has come to mean a time of wild revelry and tumult.

Sunday - Sunnandaeg, from "sunnan" meaning sun. It is regarded as a name surviving from ancient sun worship. As the Resurrection of Christ occurred on the first day of the week the early Christians began to assemble for worship on that day instead of on the Jewish Sabbath, which is Saturday.

Here's a bit of basic info about this...

## Days

The names of the days of the week are a combination of names used by the Greeks, Romans, and Germanic peoples.

Monday = day of the Moon

Tuesday = Tie, god of war

Wednesday = Woden, leader of the wild hunt

Thursday = Thor, god of thunder

Friday = Freya/Fria, goddess of love & beauty

Saturday = Saturn, god of agriculture

Sunday = day of the Sun

## Months

Several of the months are named after what used to be their order in the year. For quite some time, there were only 10 months.

September = seven

October = eight

November = nine

December = ten

Those became rather meaningless when the Caesars added two months in their honor.

July = Julius Caesar

August = Augustus Caesar

The first half of the year get their names from various gods/goddesses.

January = Janus, god of gates & doorways

February = Februa, Roman festival of purification

March = Mars, god of war

April = Aphrodite, goddess of love & beauty

May = Maia, goddess of spring

June = Juno, goddess of marriage  
Source(s): <http://www.crowl.org/Lawrence/time/days...>  
<http://www.crowl.org/Lawrence/time/month...>

A History of the Months and the  
Meanings of their Names  
A History of the Months  
January -- Janus's month  
February -- month of Februa  
Intercalaris -- inter-calendar month  
March -- Mars' month  
April -- Aphrodite's month  
May -- Maia's month  
June -- Juno's month  
July -- Julius Caesar's month  
August -- Augustus Caesar's month  
September -- the seventh month  
October -- the eighth month  
November -- the ninth month  
December -- the tenth month

Sources

See Also

A History of the Months

The original Roman year had 10 named months Martius "March", Aprilis "April", Maius "May", Junius "June", Quintilis "July", Sextilis "August", September "September", October "October", November "November", December "December", and probably two unnamed months in the dead of winter when not much happened in agriculture. The year began with Martius "March". Numa Pompilius, the second king of Rome circa 700 BC, added the two months Januarius "January" and Februarius "February". He also moved the beginning of the year from Marius to Januarius and changed the number of days in several months to be odd, a lucky number. After Februarius there was occasionally an additional month of Intercalaris "intercalendar". This is the origin of the leap-year day being in February. In 46 BC, Julius Caesar reformed the Roman calendar (hence the Julian calendar) changing the number of days in many months and removing Intercalaris.

January -- Janus's month

Middle English Januarie

Latin Januarius "of Janus"

Latin Janu(s) "Janus" + -arius "ary (pertaining to)"

Latin Januarius mensis "month of Janus"

Janus is the Roman god of gates and doorways, depicted with two faces looking in opposite directions.

His festival month is January.

Januarius had 29 days, until Julius when it became 31 days long.

February -- month of Februa

Middle English Februarius

Latin Februarius "of Februa"

Latin Februa(s) "Februa" + -arius "ary (pertaining to)"

Latin Februarius mensis "month of Februa"

Latin dies februatus "day of purification"

Februarius had 28 days, until circa 450 BC when it had 23 or 24 days on some of every second year, until Julius when it had 29 days on every fourth year and 28 days otherwise.

Februa is the Roman festival of purification, held on February fifteenth. It is possibly of Sabine origin.

Intercalaris -- inter-calendar month

Latin Intercalaris "inter-calendar"

Latin Mercedonius (popular name) "?"

Intercalaris had 27 days until the month was abolished by Julius.

March -- Mars' month

Middle English March(e)

Anglo-French March(e)

Old English Martius

Latin Martius "of Mars"

Latin Marti(s) "Mars" + -us (adj. suffix)

Latin Martius mensis "month of Mars"

Martius has always had 31 days.

March was the original beginning of the year, and the time for the resumption of war.

Mars is the Roman god of war. He is identified with the Greek god Ares.

April -- Aphrodite's month

Old English April(is)

Latin Aprilis

Etruscan Apru

Greek Aphro, short for Aphrodite.

Aprilis had 30 days, until Numa when it had 29 days, until Julius when it became 30 days long.

Aphrodite is the Greek goddess of love and beauty. She is identified with the Roman goddess Venus.

May -- Maia's month

Old French Mai

Old English Maius

Latin Maius "of Maia"

Latin Maius mensis "month of Maia"

Maius has always had 31 days.

Maia (meaning "the great one") is the Italic goddess of spring, the daughter of Faunus, and wife of Vulcan.

June -- Juno's month

Middle English jun(e)

Old French juin

Old English junius

Latin Junius "of Juno"

Latin Junius mensis "month of Juno"

Junius had 30 days, until Numa when it had 29 days, until Julius when it became 30 days long.

Juno is the principle goddess of the Roman Pantheon. She is the goddess of marriage and the well-being of women. She is the wife and sister of Jupiter. She is identified with the Greek goddess Hera.

July -- Julius Caesar's month

Middle English Julie

Latin Julius "Julius"

Latin Julius mensis "month of Julius"

Latin quintilis mensis "fifth month"

Quintilis (and later Julius) has always had 31 days.

Julius Caesar reformed the Roman calendar (hence the Julian calendar) in 46 BC. In the process, he renamed this month after himself.

August -- Augustus Caesar's month

Latin Augustus "Augustus"

Latin Augustus mensis "month of Augustus"

Latin sextilis mensis "sixth month"

Sextilis had 30 days, until Numa when it had 29 days, until Julius when it became 31 days long.

Augustus Caesar clarified and completed the calendar reform of Julius Caesar. In the process, he also renamed this month after himself.

September -- the seventh month

Middle English septembre

Latin September

Latin septem "seven" + -ber (adj. suffix)

Latin september mensis "seventh month"

September had 30 days, until Numa when it had 29 days, until Julius when it became 30 days long.

October -- the eighth month

Middle English octobre

Latin October

Latin octo "eight" + -ber (adj. suffix)  
Latin october mensis "eighth month"  
October has always had 31 days.  
November -- the ninth month  
Middle English Novembre  
Latin November  
Latin Novembris mensis "ninth month"  
Novembris had 30 days, until Numa when it had 29 days, until Julius when it became 30 days long.  
December -- the tenth month  
Middle English decembre  
Old French decembre  
Latin december "tenth month"  
Latin decem "ten" + -ber (adj. suffix)  
December had 30 days, until Numa when it had 29 days, until Julius when it became 31 days long.

#### Sources

These sources are somewhat inconsistent. I have chosen interpretations that are predominate among sources or that seem most reasonable.

William Morris, editor, *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, New College Edition, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1976

Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language, Portland House, New York, 1989

William Matthew O'Neil, *Time and the Calendars*, Sydney University Press, 1975

#### See Also

The Royal Greenwich Observatory provides information on time, the calendar, the date of Easter, the equation of time, leap years, and the year 2000 AD.

The United States Naval Observatory has several systems of time.

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#### The Seven-Day Week and the Meanings of the Names of the Days

##### The Seven Day Week

##### The Naming of the Days

Sunday -- Sun's day

Monday -- Moon's day

Tuesday -- Tiu's day

Wednesday -- Woden's day

Thursday -- Thor's day

Friday -- Freya's day

Saturday -- Saturn's day

#### Sources

#### See Also

##### The Seven-Day Week

The Babylonians marked time with lunar months. They proscribed some activities during several days of the month, particularly the

first -- the first visible crecent,

seventh -- the waxing half moon,

fourteenth -- the full moon,

nineteenth -- dedicated to an offended goddess,

twenty-first -- the waning half moon,

twenty-eighth -- the last visible crecent,

twenty-ninth -- the invisible moon, and

thirtieth (possibly) -- the invisible moon.

The major periods are seven days, 1/4 month, long. This seven-day period was later regularized and disassociated from the lunar month to become our seven-day week.

#### The Naming of the Days

The Greeks named the days week after the sun, the moon and the five known planets, which were in turn named after the gods Ares, Hermes, Zeus, Aphrodite, and Cronus. The Greeks called the days of the week the Theon hemerai "days of the Gods". The Romans substituted their equivalent gods for the Greek gods, Mars, Mercury, Jove (Jupiter), Venus, and Saturn. (The two pantheons are very similar.) The Germanic peoples generally substituted roughly similar gods for the Roman gods, Tiu (Tiwia), Woden, Thor, Freya (Fria), but did not substitute Saturn.

Sunday -- Sun's day

Middle English sone(n)day or sun(nen)day

Old English sunnandæg "day of the sun"

Germanic sunnon-dagaz "day of the sun"

Latin dies solis "day of the sun"

Ancient Greek hemera heli(o)u, "day of the sun"

Monday -- Moon's day

Middle English monday or mone(n)day

Old English mon(an)dæg "day of the moon"

Latin dies lunae "day of the moon"

Ancient Greek hemera selenes "day of the moon"

Tuesday -- Tiu's day

Middle English tiwesday or tewesday

Old English tiwesdæg "Tiw's (Tiu's) day"

Latin dies Martis "day of Mars"

Ancient Greek hemera Areos "day of Ares"

Tiu (Tiwia) is the English/Germanic god of war and the sky. He is identified with the Norse god Tyr.

Mars is the Roman god of war.

Ares is the Greek god of war.

Wednesday -- Woden's day

Middle English wodnesday, wednesday, or wednesdai

Old English wodnesdæg "Woden's day"

Latin dies Mercurii "day of Mercury"

Ancient Greek hemera Hermu "day of Hermes"

Woden is the chief Anglo-Saxon/Teutonic god. Woden is the leader of the Wild Hunt. Woden is from wod "violently insane" + -en "headship". He is identified with the Norse Odin.

Mercury is the Roman god of commerce, travel, theivery, eloquence and science. He is the messenger of the other gods.

Hermes is the Greek god of commerce, invention, cunning, and theft. He is the messenger and herald of the other gods. He serves as patron of travelers and rogues, and as the conductor of the dead to Hades.

Thursday -- Thor's day

Middle English thur(e)sday

Old English thursdæg

Old Norse thorsdagr "Thor's day"

Old English thunresdæg "thunder's day"

Latin dies Jovis "day of Jupiter"

Ancient Greek hemera Dios "day of Zeus".

Thor is the Norse god of thunder. He is represented as riding a chariot drawn by goats and wielding the hammer Miölnir. He is the defender of the Aesir, destined to kill and be killed by the Midgard Serpent.

Jupiter (Jove) is the supreme Roman god and patron of the Roman state. He is noted for creating thunder and lightning.

Zeus is Greek god of the heavens and the supreme Greek god.

Friday -- Freya's day

Middle English fridai

Old English frigedæg "Freya's day"

composed of Frige (genitive singular of Freo) + dæg "day" (most likely)

or composed of Frig "Frigg" + dæg "day" (least likely)

Germanic frije-dagaz "Freya's (or Frigg's) day"

Latin dies Veneris "Venus's day"

Ancient Greek hemera Aphrodites "day of Aphrodite"

Freo is identical with free, meaning free. It is from the Germanic frijaz meaning "beloved, belonging to the loved ones, not in bondage, free".

Freya (Fria) is the Teutonic goddess of love, beauty, and fecundity (prolific procreation). She is identified with the Norse god Freya. She is leader of the Valkyries and one of the Vanir. She is confused in Germany with Frigg.

Frigg (Frigga) is the Teutonic goddess of clouds, the sky, and conjugal (married) love. She is identified with Frigg, the Norse goddess of love and the heavens and the wife of Odin. She is one of the Aesir. She is confused in Germany with Freya.

Venus is the Roman goddess of love and beauty.

Aphrodite (Cytherea) is the Greek goddess of love and beauty.

Saturday -- Saturn's day

Middle English saterday

Old English sæter(nes)dæg "Saturn's day"

Latin dies Saturni "day of Saturn"

Ancient Greek hemera Khronu "day of Cronus"

Saturn is the Roman and Italic god of agriculture and the consort of Ops. He is believed to have ruled the earth during an age of happiness and virtue.

Cronus (Kronos, Cronos) is the Greek god (Titan) who ruled the universe until dethroned by his son Zeus.

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