

Everyday Mysteries: Why we have daylight saving time

By Department of Energy, Department of Transportation and the U.S. Navy; adapted by Newsela staff on 03.10.17

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Technician Oleg Ryabtsev performs maintenance work on a clock in Minsk, Belarus, March 29, 2008. Clocks in Belarus will move one hour ahead at midnight March 11, 2017, ushering in seven months of daylight saving time. AP Photo/Sergei Grits

Question: Why do we have daylight saving time?

Answer: The most likely answer you will hear is that we change the clocks to help farmers have more time to work their fields. But today, the reason it is law is mostly to conserve electricity, energy and, therefore, save money. Does it save energy? We'll explain that soon, but first, comes an explanation of what it is.

How Does It Work?

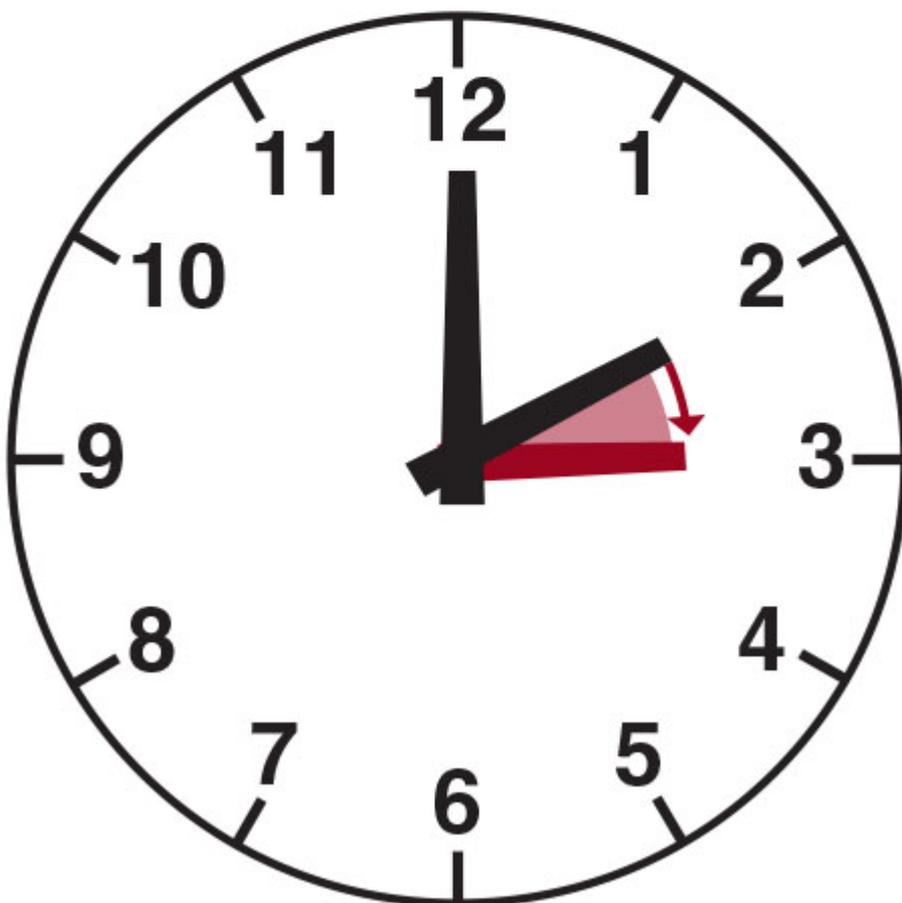
By law, clocks in most areas of the United States are adjusted ahead one hour in the spring for the summer months, known as daylight time. Clocks are turned back one hour in the winter months, known as standard time.

The dates for the beginning and end of daylight time have changed as Congress has passed new laws. Since 2007, daylight time begins in the United States on the second Sunday in March and ends on the first Sunday in November. On that day in March, clocks are set ahead one hour at 2 a.m. standard time, which becomes 3 a.m. daylight time. On the first Sunday in November, clocks are set back one hour at 2 a.m. daylight time. It becomes 1 a.m. standard time.

Spring forward

Daylight saving time begins at 2 a.m. Sunday.

Remember to set your clocks forward one hour before going to bed Saturday



Does Everyone Change Their Clock?

Not all places in the United States observe daylight time. Hawaii and most of Arizona do not use it. The most recent change to local daylight time was in 2006 when Indiana adopted the use of daylight time statewide.

Most of the Northern Hemisphere countries that observe daylight time are in Europe and North America. They are in the northern half of the globe. Parts of Iceland, Singapore, Uzbekistan, Belarus and Turkey have tried it. Russia used it under President Dmitri Medvedev, but President Vladimir Putin abolished daylight saving time in 2014 because people had grown annoyed with the late sunrises in winter. Russia is now back to “standard” or “winter time.”

A couple of nations in the Southern Hemisphere observe summer time. However, their starting and ending times are different because summer there occurs during the Northern Hemisphere's winter months.

Countries set their own rules for time changes.

History Of Daylight Time In U.S.

Benjamin Franklin is credited with the idea of daylight saving. He thought of it when he woke up extra early one morning in Paris, France. His idea was to make the best use of daylight hours.

The reason it has stuck around is the idea of saving money. Franklin thought about this when he wrote a letter to the editor of the Journal of Paris in 1784. He said that the idea could save France money on candles if they slept when it was dark and woke when it was light. Later, the light bulb was invented. People thought daylight saving would help save money on light bulbs.

Many countries adopted daylight saving during World War I to conserve coal during the war. Daylight saving time was stopped in the United States in 1919, after the war's end. It was re-established nationally during World War II.

In 1966, President Lyndon Johnson signed a law choosing dates for daylight saving. However, states could decide not to adopt it.

The 1970s brought an energy crisis. Congress enacted earlier starting dates for daylight time. Oil and gas were in short supply after conflicts in the Middle East, where much of the oil used in the United States came from.

Does Daylight Saving Time Actually Work?

This is a big debate. Some studies seem to show that because people are tired while their bodies adjust to the time change, their work suffers and there might be more workplace accidents. Other studies say that it saves lives because traveling at night is more dangerous, so fewer bicyclists and runners get hurt if they can travel during light hours.

The biggest debate is over cost. Some experts say that it can even cost more. Matthew Kotchen, a Yale University professor, did a study in 2006 in Indiana. The study found that daylight saving time resulted in higher energy costs of \$9 million more annually because people were using more heating and air conditioning. He says the effect could be greater in hotter states such as Florida.

Some business owners think it makes more money for them. Representatives of the golf industry contacted Congress in 1986 in favor of daylight saving time, saying that they were able to make an extra \$400 million per year.

Quiz

- 1 Which detail would be MOST important to include in a summary of the article?
- (A) Not all places in the United States observe daylight time.
 - (B) Parts of Iceland, Singapore, Uzbekistan, Belarus and Turkey have tried it.
 - (C) A couple of nations in the Southern Hemisphere observe summer time.
 - (D) He says the effect could be greater in hotter states such as Florida.

- 2 Read the sentence from the article.

Russia used it under President Dmitri Medvedev, but President Vladimir Putin abolished daylight saving time in 2014 because people had grown annoyed with the late sunrises in winter.

Which of the following phrases helps you understand the meaning of "abolished"?

- (A) northern half of the globe
 - (B) people had grown annoyed
 - (C) Russia is now back to
 - (D) starting and ending times
- 3 Read the sentence from the article.

Congress enacted earlier starting dates for daylight time.

Which of the following words, if it replaced "enacted" in this sentence, would CHANGE the meaning of the sentence?

- (A) passed
- (B) established
- (C) ordered
- (D) requested

- 4 Which statement BEST reflects a central idea of the article?
- (A) Several U.S. states either do not observe daylight saving time or follow their own rules about it.
 - (B) Benjamin Franklin started the idea for daylight saving time by saying it would help France save money on candles.
 - (C) Daylight saving time is meant to save money by increasing the number of daylight hours.
 - (D) The golf industry says it makes \$400 million more per year because of daylight saving time.