

News & Info

Vernal Equinox

This year, spring begins on Tuesday March 20th. Known as the spring equinox, or vernal equinox, the day and night are nearly the same length on this day. The word "Equinox" comes from Latin and means "equal night".

In the Northern Hemisphere, the vernal equinox signals a renewal in nature as the days grow longer and warmer. It's also during this time when many countries turn their clocks forward one hour in that sometimes controversial ritual known as Daylight Saving Time (see article on the next page for more details!).

"Spring forward, fall back"

In English we often use this mnemonic to help us remember which direction to shift the clock: in the spring we move the clock forward one hour, and in the autumn we move it back.



An Interview

with Jenny Keicher

For this edition of our newsletter, we talked with VO trainer Jenny Keicher about her experience teaching English in France.

Hi Jenny, can you tell us a little about yourself?

I'm from Swansea in South Wales but I moved to Oyonnax when I was 12. After the baccalaureate, I worked for American Express Travel for the next 24 years, moving between France and the UK. In 2009 I started teaching English after completing a CELTA diploma.

What challenges do your students sometimes have when learning English?

Lack of confidence is the number one problem. They all think they're bad at grammar, and they're often afraid to speak. So my main objective is to help them realise they speak better than they think they do. If I can get them to actually enjoy learning English then I consider I've done a pretty good job!

What top tips do you give to your English students?

Listen to English on podcasts. It's easy to fit into your daily routine — in the car, on public transport, etc. It helps improve vocabulary and pronunciation. It's often possible to download the transcripts to read over and work on afterwards.

What do you like about teaching English?

The contact with people. I thrive on getting to know them. I get huge job satisfaction out of seeing someone progress and become capable of doing something they couldn't do before.

What do you do when you are not teaching?

When I'm not teaching I'm preparing my lessons! Then there's Zumba classes, scrapbooking, cycling, and spending time with family and friends.

Jenny's podcast recommendations:

- [BBC Learning English; 6 Minute English](#)
- [Breaking News English](#)
- [News in Levels](#)
- [Lyrics training](#)
- [Ted Talks and related podcasts](#)

VOCABULARY

dabble (verb) - to take part in an activity in a casual or superficial way

stretch back - to refer to a point in the past

make a case for (something) - to go over the reasons why something should be done

see the light of day - if something sees the light of day, it is produced, comes into existence or is made available to the public

set off - to cause something to begin

proponent - a person who advocates a theory, proposal or course of action

irrefutable - impossible to deny or disprove

not all it's cracked up to be - not as good, enjoyable, special, or worthwhile as people insist or believe

negligible - so small or unimportant so as to not be worth considering; insignificant

Summer Time Trivia

In the United States, only Arizona and Hawaii do not observe DST.

Many countries near the equator never shift their clocks.

Neither China nor Japan follow DST.

Less than 40% of the world's countries observe Daylight Saving Time.

Daylight Saving Time

Daylight Saving Time is the practice of shifting the clock ahead by one hour in order to have extra afternoon sunlight during the summer months.

When did Daylight Saving Time Begin?

On July 1st, 1908, residents of Thunder Bay, Canada, turned their clocks forward one hour to begin the first modern-day practice of Daylight Saving Time (DST). But humans dabbling in time change stretches back to ancient times when the Romans used water clocks with varying scales that corresponded to different months of the year.

More recently, in 1895, New Zealand scientist George Vernon Hudson made a case for changing clocks between October and March. William Willett, a British builder, made a similar suggestion in 1905. Both men's ideas generated interest but neither saw the light of day to become common practice.

Then in 1916, during the middle of World War I, Germany turned their clocks ahead one hour on April 30th in an effort to economise energy for the war effort, thereby setting off a global trend that was eventually followed by many other countries around the world.

Advantages of DST

Sometimes called "Summer Time," DST is now followed by more than 70 countries worldwide. Proponents of DST say the advantages are irrefutable — a decrease in energy consumption, traffic accidents and crime. Others cite the economic and health benefits, saying that extra daylight encourages people to shop more and to participate in outdoor activities.

Summer Time — Not all it's cracked up to be

And yet not everyone is happy to "spring forward" into summer time. Many claim that sleep cycles are disturbed, especially in the week following the shift to DST. Some studies say the risk of heart attack increases when summer time begins. As for the energy savings, some believe the benefits are negligible at best. Others are convinced that longer summer days lead to greater fuel consumption, and therefore a general increase in atmospheric pollution.

Whatever your opinion about DST, one thing is for sure: if you live in France, it begins on Sunday March 25th, when 2:00 am becomes 3:00 am. To regain that hour of lost sleep, you'll have to wait until we "fall back" to standard time on October 28.