

Daylight saving

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based on http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daylight_saving_time#cite_note-27

Part one

It's 7.15 on a Monday morning in late October and I am sitting at my desk. Through the window I can see the clear line of the prealpine peaks, dark against the brightening sky. Day is beginning.



As I look through the window, the thought comes to me that next Monday when the mountains begin to be visible against the sky, it won't be quarter past *seven*, but quarter past *six*. That's because next weekend, as we say in the UK, "the clocks go back".

But why do we go through this yearly ritual of putting the clocks forward by one hour, only to put them back again just over half a year later? To me it feels like a long-standing tradition, something we have done, year in, year out, for so long that we can no longer remember why we do it.

The reality is somewhat different. The "tradition" of changing our clocks by one hour—the practice often known as "daylight saving"—is less than one hundred years old. How, why and when we started using daylight saving is an interesting story.

When was daylight saving introduced?

In our modern industrialised society we all need to work to a standardised clock: shops, offices and schools all have their own established opening and closing times. Radio and TV programmes are broadcast according to a pre-set schedule. Train departures and arrivals follow an advertised timetable—though how well they do it varies from one country to another!

In agricultural communities, though, the rhythm of daily life is governed by the amount of time between sunrise and sunset, and of course that changes over the course of the year: it gets longer as you approach midsummer and gets shorter after that.

Back in Roman times the day was divided up into twelve equal "hours", but the length of the hours varied according to the season. So in Rome in winter an hour lasted about 44 minutes, while in summer it lasted up to 75 minutes. Later on in history such 'solar hours', which varied in length, became replaced by 'civil hours' which were all the same length.

In the eighteenth century, when the American founding father Benjamin Franklin went to live for a time in Europe, he seems to have been shocked by the fact that people in Belgium and France slept through several hours of good, profitable daylight on a summer morning. Franklin was an economical man, and worked out how much money they could save on candles if they

got up earlier. He didn't go so far as to propose daylight saving, however, because in the eighteenth century, clock time was still not standardised. The further west you were, the later the day started.



George Vernon Hudson

It wasn't until the *nineteenth* century that the spread of railways made countries adopt a fixed clock time. And it was in 1895 that George V. Hudson was the first to propose a two-hour shift of the clocks in his native New Zealand. A few years later an Englishman, William Willett, proposed a system of putting the clocks forward in the summer months to make the most of the daylight hours. In both New Zealand and England the idea raised a lot of interest, but was not adopted. The advantages of daylight saving were not enough to persuade countries to introduce it during peacetime. However, when the war started, countries felt a need to save valuable fuel, and, as a result, on the 30th April 1916 Germany and its allies introduced "Sommerzeit" by putting the clocks forward. Curiously, Britain and its allies soon copied Germany's idea, even though they were at war with them. The United States overcame its objections to daylight saving in 1918.

It's interesting how it takes a big crisis to make a big change like daylight saving possible. When the First World War was over, the idea of daylight saving was quickly abandoned, though some countries reintroduced it for short periods. It wasn't until the big energy crisis of the 1970s that daylight saving was widely established in Europe and North America.

End of part one

Part two of this article on daylight saving will follow soon, but in the meantime a few quick exercises.

How would you say the following sentence in English?

Dieses Wochenende ist Zeitumstellung.

Make five more sentences based on this model:

The further west you are, the later the sun rises.

The further north you go...