

Something to Smile About



To humans, a smile is a universal sign of happiness and friendship. So don't be afraid to show your pearly whites this month, because June is Smile Month.

Throughout most of the animal world, the baring of teeth is often a sign of threat or aggression. Baboons, for example, are known to bare their teeth in shows of force. Some primates, though, bare their teeth as a show of submissiveness. Biologists believe that this behavior may be where the story of the human smile begins.

Humans are the only species that uses the smile, in various forms, to demonstrate happiness. Even visually impaired children who have never seen a smile show the same kinds of smiles that sighted people do. This tells us that smiling is something preprogrammed into humans. This behavior is not learned but instinctual.

Biologists speculate that amongst primates, because teeth are still used for biting, to bare them is naturally an aggressive warning of an impending bite. Humans, however, have evolved other means of aggression that have nothing to do with teeth. Teeth, instead, have become associated with laughing and eating, both of which are incredibly powerful forms of social bonding. In fact, anthropologist and evolutionary psychologist Robin Dunbar asserts that laughter has taken the place of grooming as one of our primary means of social bonding. By this measure, laughter and showing our teeth may be one of the most powerful social cues we humans have in our social arsenal.

We smile when we are happy, but can forcing ourselves to smile make us feel happy even when we are not? Neurologists have discovered that the physical act of smiling triggers chemical reactions in the brain that boost our moods, lower stress, and even strengthen our immune systems. So don't just smile during the month of June; do it all year round!

June Birthdays

In astrology, those born June 1–20 are Gemini's Twins. Twins seem to have two personalities and can blend into any situation. They have an energetic and fun-loving side that is the life of the party, but also a deep and emotional side that needs love and nurturing. Those born June 21–30 are the Crabs of Cancer. Guided by their hearts, Crabs are emotional and nurturing. They create deep bonds and comfortable homes and are always willing to welcome people into their circle.

Marilyn Monroe (actress) – June 1, 1926
Josephine Baker (entertainer) – June 3, 1906
Tom Jones (singer) – June 7, 1940
Frank Lloyd Wright (architect) – June 8, 1867
Harriet Beecher Stowe (author) – June 14, 1811
Igor Stravinsky (composer) – June 17, 1882
Lionel Ritchie (singer) – June 20, 1950
Octavia Butler (writer) – June 22, 1947
Pearl S. Buck (writer) – June 26, 1892
John Elway (quarterback) – June 28, 1960

A Bunch of Hot Air



Hot Air Balloon Day, on June 5, celebrates the incredible achievement of the Montgolfier brothers. On this day in 1783, the brothers demonstrated the first unmanned flight of a hot air balloon in the skies above their hometown of Annonay, France. The balloon itself was constructed of taffeta, fabric, and paper. It may seem amazing that it lifted off the ground at all considering that it weighed in at over 500 pounds. But fly it did, reaching a tremendous height of 6,000 feet. The Montgolfier brothers knew their invention was a wonder, and they decided to take it to Paris for a demonstration in front of King Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette. The balloon was still unmanned, but no less marvelous for its historic flying of a rooster, duck, and sheep before a crowd of 130,000 Parisians. The miracle of flight had, at last, moved from imagination to reality.

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Celebrating June

Beautiful in Your Skin Month

Soul Food Month

Lemonade Days

June 1–9

World Bicycle Day

June 3

Banana Split Days

June 7–8

Roller Coaster Day

June 13

Father's Day

June 16

World Music Day

June 21

Social Media Day

June 30

The Magnificent Abyss

June is World Ocean Month, a time to celebrate everything in and under the sea. What would our world be without the ocean? The ocean produces over half of the air we breathe. Covering 70% of the planet's surface, the ocean's currents distribute heat all around the globe, regulating both the world's climate and weather patterns. And although 95% of the ocean remains unexplored, it is home to over two million different species, including the largest animal ever known to have existed on Earth.

The blue whale, capable of growing to almost 100 feet long and weighing in at 190 tons, is larger by far than any dinosaur that ever walked the earth. This massive creature relies on one of the ocean's smallest animals for its chief food source. The blue whale eats krill, those tiny two-inch-long, shrimp-like crustaceans that swarm by the tens of thousands. That the world's largest animal should rely on one of the smallest should not come as a surprise, for this is just another example of Earth's great symbiosis. Whether on land or in the sea, all organisms are interdependent on each other for their survival.

The vast diversity of life in our oceans is astounding. Large and charismatic animals such as whales, sharks, dolphins, rays, walrus, and seals get the lion's share of attention. Tourist hotspots such as reefs, beaches, and lagoons along the coasts draw visitors. But the mystery of the ocean lies in its vast depths. Humans are most familiar with the upper ocean, perhaps the top 500 feet. What is astounding is that the average depth of the ocean is over 13,000 feet deep. That's as high as the peaks of the Rocky Mountains! So what mysteries lie at those unplumbed depths? Scientists have discovered sea anemones and upside-down swimming fish under ice sheets, coral reefs off Greenland, and new species of shrimp and sponges near underwater sea vents. Who is to say that mermaids do not exist, given the fact that so many parts of the ocean have been unexplored?

The Spirit of Yoga

You don't need to bend over backward to celebrate International Day of Yoga on June 21. In 2015, the United Nations decided to create a day honoring this ancient Indian practice devoted to uniting body, mind, and spirit.



As yoga has grown in popularity, most people have understood its practice as a series of stretches ranging from the easy to the physically challenging. In many ways, yoga is a vigorous form of physical activity that demands athleticism and flexibility. Yoga, however, is much more than physical exercise. As one of its most famous practitioners, B. K. S. Iyengar, stated, "Yoga cultivates the way of maintaining a balanced attitude in day-to-day life." It is this balance of mind that makes yoga a spiritual as well as physical exercise.

Yoga was developed 5,000 years ago by mystics seeking harmony between their body and spirit as a way of achieving divine enlightenment. So while yoga may be practiced today as merely a physical exercise, this is just one side of the practice. Yoga also touches the soul.

Yoga postures, or poses, require focused attention and intention. Slow, careful breathing and an inward focus akin to meditation help yoga practitioners clear their minds of worry and become present in the now. These practitioners shed their daily worries the way a snake sheds its skin, and become energized. Some even feel a greater sense of creativity, insight, imagination, and intuition. These are the gifts that yoga can give to our spirits, while our bodies enjoy the gifts of endurance, flexibility, and stamina.

Not everyone is interested in yoga as a spiritual practice, though. Luckily, there is no penalty for those who wish to use yoga solely as exercise. The yogi and spiritual guide Amit Ray perhaps defined yoga best when he stated, "Yoga means addition—addition of energy, strength, and beauty to body, mind, and soul." For these reasons, everyone should add this holiday to their calendars.

In the Name of the Father

Fathers, thank mothers for the creation of Father's Day. It was a woman named Sonora Smart Dodd, one of six children raised by her widower father, who lobbied to create a father's equivalent to Mother's Day. Dodd took her cause to churches, shopkeepers, the YMCA, and local government officials until finally, on June 19, 1910, Washington state celebrated the first Father's Day. Over the years, the holiday gained traction, and in 1924, President Calvin Coolidge urged all states to adopt Father's Day as a holiday. But this was not without controversy. Throughout the 1920s and '30s, groups attempted to squash both Mother's and Father's Day. They argued instead for one holiday, Parents' Day, for, as one advocate said, "both parents should be loved and respected together." It wasn't until 1972 that Richard Nixon, in the middle of his presidential re-election campaign, signed a proclamation making Father's Day a federally recognized holiday—58 years after Mother's Day was made official.

Operation Overlord



Operation Overlord, the invasion most familiarly known as D-Day, commenced on the morning of June 6, 1944. Forces of Nazi Germany held the beaches of France's Normandy coastline. Allied forces numbering 156,000 American, British, and Canadian troops landed en masse to retake the beaches. D-Day has been called the largest amphibious assault in history, and its success was largely due to both the heroism of the Allied soldiers and months of planning. General Dwight D. Eisenhower enacted a masterful plan of deception that left the Germans unaware of where the Allies would strike. Fake radio transmissions detailed the movement of a phantom army. Even fake supplies and equipment were routed to misleading locations. Within a week, despite heavy losses, the beaches were within Allied control. It was the beginning of the end of the war in Europe.

Rope Dancers Over Niagara

On the morning of June 30, 1859, an audience of 25,000 swarmed both the American and Canadian sides of Niagara Falls to gawk at a French acrobat named Jean Francois Gravelet, better known by his stage name of Monsieur Charles Blondin. Blondin was going to attempt the absurd feat of walking across the Niagara River gorge over the roaring falls.



The Great Blondin had arrived months earlier in the hopes of making the crossing during the winter. Snow, ice, and deadly gusts of winds had convinced him to return in the summer. His crossing was described as the act of a madman, but Blondin had been tightrope walking since the age of four. He believed it was his natural calling in life. Standing only five-foot-five and weighing 140 pounds, he was described by his manager as "more like a fantastic sprite than a human being." He was also a fantastic showman. He stepped out onto the hempen cable with the aid of a 26-foot long pole. Spectators gasped when he sat down on the rope after walking only one-third of the way across and called for one of the tourist boats, the *Maid of the Mist*, to anchor beneath him. He lowered a rope and hauled up a bottle of wine, from which he poured himself a glass and had a drink. When he reached the other side, he turned around to walk back again, this time hauling a daguerreotype camera! He again paused in the middle of his balancing act, this time to set up the camera to snap a picture of the crowd on the American side. The Great Blondin's fame skyrocketed overnight, and he would return to Niagara again and again, with his highwire stunts becoming ever more absurd. It is estimated that he made the crossing 300 times over his lifetime.

The Great Blondin's feats over Niagara were by no means the last. As recently as June 15, 2012, an aerialist by the name of Nik Wallenda crossed over Niagara on a two-inch-wide wire—but he crossed directly over the falls as opposed to farther down the gorge, entering the history books as the first person to do so.

Stars and Stripes Forever

Wave the flag proudly on June 14, which is Flag Day in the United States. In the midst of the American Revolutionary War, the colonists had no flag to unify them. Regiments flew their own unique flags to identify their colony or their group. In June of 1775, the Second Continental Congress met in Philadelphia to create a Continental Army. It was then that they created the first American flag of 13 alternating red and white stripes with a Union Jack in the corner. Unfortunately, this flag looked too similar to the British flag, and General George Washington was quick to ask for the design of a new symbol. So on June 14, 1777, the Continental Congress designed a new flag consisting of 13 alternating red and white stripes, with a circle of 13 white stars on a field of blue—the birth of the Stars and Stripes. It seems that the idea of a circle of stars on a field of blue was a popular one, for on June 29, 1985, the European Communities adopted a blue flag with a circle of 12 yellow stars as their banner for a unified Europe.

Happy Birthday to Whom?



On June 27, 1859, a schoolteacher named Mildred J. Hill composed a tune she called "Good Morning to All." Her younger sister, Patty Hill, wrote some cheerful lyrics that the two could sing to their students upon their arrival at school. In 1924, however, the song underwent a dramatic change. A verse was added with the line "Happy birthday to you." Soon, it became the most popular song in the world, sung on everyone's birthday. Yet the song was never credited or copyrighted. In 1935, the Summy Company decided to register a copyright to the song, and then in 1988, Warner/Chappell Music purchased the company owning the copyright, claiming ownership of the song. While Warner/Chappell claims that a royalty of \$700 is owed each time the song is sung, no one is going to let an exorbitant fee like that spoil the pleasure of singing "Happy Birthday to You" at a loved one's birthday party.