

The International Day of Peace

With so many people around the world suffering as a result of war and violence, the International Day of Peace is as important as ever. This special day, which was declared by the United Nations in 1981, is observed on 21 September every year.

The International Day of Peace at the United Nations

On International Peace Day, the United Nations asks for a 24-hour ceasefire of all hostilities around the world. It also asks people to observe one minute of silence at noon to honour victims of war and violence. The day begins with the Peace Bell Ceremony at the United Nations headquarters. The Peace Bell was donated by the United Nations Association of Japan in June 1954 and is made of metal that includes coins contributed by people from 65 member countries. The bell is a symbol of hope for peace and is rung several times a year, including on International Peace Day. After the bell has been rung, the UN Secretary-General delivers a message.

The purpose of the International Day of Peace

The International Day of Peace is for 'commemorating and strengthening the ideals of peace within and among all nations and peoples'. Put simply, it aims to build a more peaceful world for everyone who lives in it. Peace affects almost every aspect of our lives. Each year, the United Nations chooses a different theme for this special day, for example 'End racism: build peace' or 'Climate action for peace'. This helps us to see that true peace can only be achieved when all people are treated equally, or that we must combat the climate emergency, which threatens all of our lives.

International Day of Peace events

As well as taking part in a one-minute silence at midday (local time), people in cities, towns and villages worldwide can get involved in many different events on this special day. This could be in the field of the arts, with photography, film, music or dance. It could be sports activities such as a football match for peace. Or it could be yoga, meditation and prayer. Children and teenagers also take part in a wide range of activities related to peace and unity, often focusing on preventing school violence and bullying.

International Day of Peace online

With the internet and social media, there is a lot more awareness of International Peace Day than back in 1981. Social media posts sharing information, ideas and peace messages reach millions of people all over the globe. There are many online events which people can register for on the day, such as live shows, conferences and workshops.

What we can all do for peace

The International Day of Peace isn't just about ending international conflicts. It is also about changing our behaviour towards each other and our environment. For example, we can try to bring peace to our personal lives by saying sorry and making peace with someone we know. Individual actions add up to great things when they are multiplied by millions of people all over the planet, and we can all contribute to making the world a more peaceful place.

Tasks

Task 1

Match the information (1–6) to the explanations (a–f).

Information

1. 21 September
2. the internet and social media
3. 1981
4. 1954
5. racism and climate action
6. films, meditation
football matches

Explanation

- a. the year when the International Day of Peace began
- b. the date when the International Day of Peace takes place every year
- c. the year when the Peace Bell was given to the United Nations
- d. some of the themes for the International Day of Peace
- e. some of the events that take place
- f. technology that has helped increase and awareness of this day

Task 2

Complete the sentences.

events	bullying	silence	ceasefire
peaceful	peace	theme	coins

1. The United Nations asks for a ... of 24 hours.
2. It also asks people to observe one minute of
3. The Peace Bell is made of metal that includes ... from different countries.
4. The Peace Bell is a symbol of hope for
5. Each year there is a different ... for the International Day of Peace.
6. Activities for young people often focus on the problem of
7. You can register for online ... for the International Day of Peace.
8. By changing our behaviour, we can help to make the world more