

# Birthday around the world

Name:

Class:

No.

Everybody has a birthday. Many children around the world celebrate their birthdays like children in the United States. They have a birthday cake, gifts, and sometimes a birthday party. Friends and family gather around a table with a birthday cake on it. They sing "Happy Birthday to You." Two American sisters wrote this song in 1893, but people still sing this song today! The birthday cake usually has lighted candles on it, one candle for each year of the child's life. The birthday child makes a wish and then blows out all the candles. If the child blows out the candles in one breath, it is said that the wish will come true. Other countries have different customs.

In Norway, Denmark, and Sweden, people fly the country's flag outside their home to tell everyone that someone in the family is having a birthday. In Denmark, a parent puts gifts around a child's bed when the child is sleeping at night. When the child wakes up in the morning, the gifts will be the first thing the child sees. In Sweden and also in Finland, the birthday child gets breakfast in bed!

In some countries, some years are more important than others. In Holland, these are 5, 10, 15, 20, and 21. They call them "crown" years. On a crown birthday, the birthday child or young adult gets a much more important gift. The family also decorates the child's chair at the dining table with flowers, paper, and balloons. The special years in Japan are 3, 5, and 7. These are the lucky years. On November 15 every year, there is a festival called "7-5-3" when the children and their families go to a religious place. Then the family gives a party for the child and gives the child gifts. In India, because of religious reasons, Hindu children only get to celebrate their birthdays until the age of 16.

Birthday cakes around the world come in different sizes and flavors. There are even ice cream birthday cakes today. But in China, there is no birthday cake. Friends and family go out to lunch, and to wish the birthday child a long life, they eat noodles!



## VOCABULARY BUILDING

Complete these sentences with the words in the boxes.

luck (noun) lucky (adjective)

1. Number 13 is my \_\_\_\_\_ number.  
2. Good \_\_\_\_\_ with your exams!

breathe (verb) breath (noun)

3. Take a deep \_\_\_\_\_.

4. It's good to go out and \_\_\_\_\_ some fresh air.

flavor (verb) flavors (noun)

5. I like the \_\_\_\_\_ of vanilla and chocolate.

6. I \_\_\_\_\_ many dishes with garlic and ginger.

QUIZ!

What do many children around the world do on their birthdays?

- Go to school
- Celebrate with cake, gifts, and a party
- Eat noodles
- Travel to other countries

Who wrote the song "Happy Birthday to You"?

- Two American brothers
- A British composer
- Two American sisters
- Swedish musicians

What does a birthday cake usually have on it?

- Toys
- Ice cream
- Balloons
- Candles

What happens if the child blows out all the candles in one breath?

- Their wish may come true
- They get more gifts
- The cake disappears
- They sing the birthday song again

What do people in Norway, Denmark, and Sweden do to show it's someone's birthday?

- Send flowers
- Fly the national flag
- Sing in the streets
- Bake special bread

QUIZ!

What do children in Sweden and Finland get on their birthday morning?

- Breakfast in bed
- A cake
- Balloons
- A toy from school

What are the "crown" years in Holland?

- 1, 2, 3
- 3, 6, 9
- 7, 14, 21
- 5, 10, 15, 20, and 21

What do Japanese families do during the 7-5-3 festival?

- Fly kites
- Travel abroad
- Eat cake
- Go to a religious place and give a party

Until what age do Hindu children in India celebrate birthdays?

- 10
- 16
- 12
- 18

What do people in China eat to wish someone a long life?

- Cake
- Noodles
- Rice
- Fish

## vocabulary in context

Complete these sentences with the words in the box.

breath custom flag gather around candle decorate flavors lucky

1. People around the world have different birthday \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Children in the United States usually have a birthday cake with \_\_\_\_\_ on it.
3. Friends and family \_\_\_\_\_ the child and the birthday cake.
4. It is sometimes not easy to blow out the candles in one \_\_\_\_\_.
5. In Norway, Sweden, and Denmark, people put a \_\_\_\_\_ outside the house.
6. Birthday cakes can have different \_\_\_\_\_ like chocolate or vanilla.
7. In Japan, 3, 5, and 7 are \_\_\_\_\_ years.
8. In Holland, parents \_\_\_\_\_ a child's chair with flowers.



- 1. to gather around
- 2. candles
- 3. breath
- 4. customs
- 5. a flag
- 6. to decorate
- 7. lucky
- 8. flavors

- a. the habits of a country's group
- b. a piece of cloth with special colors for a country
- c. having good things happen by chance
- d. sticks of hard wax with a string on top that you light
- e. stand together in a group
- f. special tastes
- g. make something look nice by adding things to it
- h. the air that you let in or let out of your mouth

## looking for details

One piece of information in each sentence is not correct. Rewrite the sentence with the correct information.

1. There is one candle for each year of your hand on a birthday cake.
2. In Denmark, they put gifts around the child's cake.
3. Two Danish sisters wrote the famous birthday song.
4. In Holland, the happy years are 5, 10, 15, 20, and 21.
5. In Finland, the birthday child gets gifts in bed.
6. In India, Hindu children celebrate their birthdays after the age of 16.