



About the USA – Virtual Classroom Newsletter for English Teachers

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Looking Ahead to 2008 New Year's Resolutions

It's that time of year again when many people resolve to improve their lives. Have you started making your 2008 resolutions yet? A promise that you make to yourself to start doing something good or stop doing something bad on the first day of the year: lose weight, pay off debts, save money, get a better job, get fit, eat right, get a better education, drink less alcohol, quit smoking, reduce stress, take a trip, or volunteer to help others. Look for the most [popular New Years Resolutions](#) at the [USA.gov Home Page](#).

Links

- About.com: [Top 10 New Year's Resolutions](#)
- American Academy of Pediatrics: [20 Healthy New Year's Resolutions for Kids](#)
- The Independent: [10 Green New Year's Resolutions](#)
- NPR: [Reflections on the New Year](#): Commentator and philosopher Alain de Botton argues in favor of New Year's resolutions.

Teaching Resources

- **Teacher Vision:** [New Year's Resolutions](#) Do you make New Year's resolutions? What is a resolution? A resolution is a promise. It is a promise that you make to yourself! It is a tradition for people to make resolutions at the beginning of a new year. There are different kinds of resolutions.
- **BBC: Learning English**, The Flatmates, Episode 23: [New Year's Resolutions](#) The flatmates discuss their New Year's resolutions.
- **Scholastic.com:** [New Year's Resolution Time Capsules](#) Start the New Year by helping your students write goals and promises to themselves.

New Year's Resolution: Improve your English

- **Voice of America: Wordmaster - Five New Year's Resolutions for Learners to Improve Their English**

English teacher Lida Baker suggests five resolutions for people who want to improve their English in the New Year.

"My first resolution that I would recommend people make is to spend a certain amount of time listening to English -- and it can be five minutes a day or it can be 10 minutes a week or it can be whatever suits a person's work schedule, life schedule or whatever. But it's really important to set goals and to stick to them."

[MP3 - Download Audio](#)

[Listen to MP3](#)

[Listen in RealAudio](#)

Article

[New Year's Resolutions](#), New York Times, By Paul Krugman, December 26, 2003: In an op-ed published in the New York Times in December 2003, Paul Krugman proposed some rules for 2004 political reporting. "Those rules should still stand true as we get closer to the 2008 elections: Don't talk about clothes. Actually look at the candidates' policy proposals. Beware of personal anecdotes. Look at the candidates' records. Don't fall for political histrionics. It's not about you." Election Guide: [Calendar of Elections](#)

The earliest reliable records of resolutions are in Roman writings from around 180 A.D., says anthropologist Douglas Raybeck of Hamilton College. Planning ahead and trying to change things is uniquely human, he explains. Romans wanted to get along better with neighbors, help the poor and improve their bodies. (Sound familiar?) There are no records, however, about the strength of Roman "will power" and how they measured up to their resolutions. [Source](#): National Public Radio (NPR)



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Nationwide Survey Finds: [Americans Resolving To Go Green in 2008](#)

Americans are determined to lead a "green" New Year. Just under half -- 49% -- of all American adults say they will make a green New Year's resolution this year, according to the results of a poll released by Tiller, LLC, a consultancy. The survey found that younger respondents were generally more focused on the environment than older Americans. Fifty-eight percent of Americans, 18 to 24 years old, said they would make a green New Year's resolution for 2008.



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<http://usinfo.state.gov/politics/elections/>

USINFO: Mike Huckabee, Barack Obama Win First 2008 Election Races - Voters turn out in record numbers to participate in Iowa caucuses: In lines that stretched around schools and churches, in small towns and in big cities, you came together as Democrats, Republicans and independents to stand up and say that we are one nation," said Obama. "We are one people. And our time for change has come."

Links:

- The Green Papers: [Primaries/Caucus/Conventions Glossary](#)
- Project Vote Smart: [How Does the Primary Process Work?](#)

Teaching Resource:

- Newshour EXTRA: [Lesson – The Presidential Nominating System](#) Introduction to the system of primaries and caucuses by which candidates for U.S. president are nominated by their parties.



© <http://www.iowacaucus.org/>

"What Iowa has going for it is that it is a small state where candidates can talk to voters one-on-one." ([Voice of America article](#))

Links

- New York Times – [Iowa's Caucuses](#)
- Iowa Democratic Party www.iowademocrats.org
- Republican Party of Iowa www.iowagop.org



© <http://www.thenewhampshireprimary.com/>

"New Hampshire is small in size, and has only 1.3 million people out of the U.S. total of about 300 million. But when New Hampshire votes, it commands the attention of the entire nation... Every four years, New Hampshire temporarily becomes the center of the U.S. political universe." ([Voice of America article](#))

Article

- UnionLeader.com: [Overview - NH's vote grabs a national spotlight](#)

ELECTIONS 2008 - Caucuses and Primaries

❖ [RESULTS](#) of the IOWA CAUCUSES (National Public Radio)

In primary elections and caucuses, a vote cast for a presidential candidate is actually a vote for that candidate's delegates to their political party's national convention, which takes place about two months before the final vote. A **primary** is a state-level election where voters affiliated with political parties choose candidates to represent their parties in the general election. A **caucus** is a local-level meeting of registered party members to determine support for a candidate. The results of these meetings are combined on a statewide basis to determine a state's party nominee. Caucuses were the original method for selecting candidates but have decreased in number since the primary system was introduced in the early 1900s.

Democratic state primaries use proportional voting; the number of delegates sent to the party convention later in the year is relative to the candidates' percentage of the vote. The **Republicans** allow proportional or winner-takes-all ballots. The states then send their delegates to the party conventions in 2008. Democrats will send their elected delegates to their convention in Denver, Colorado from August 25-28; the Republicans from September 1-4 in St Paul, Minnesota.

Victories in caucuses and primaries held early in the election year, such as those in Iowa and New Hampshire, can influence the outcome of later state primaries. These dates, and the amount of time between a primary and general election, influence how early candidates begin campaigning and choices made about how and when campaign funds are spent. Historically, the Iowa caucus in the Midwest and the New Hampshire primary in New England, held in January of each four-year presidential election cycle, have been the first two events in the race for each party's nomination. While past elections saw these events at the end of January or in February, the Iowa caucus for the 2008 elections is scheduled to take place on January 3, and the New Hampshire primary on January 8. The two states have kept moving their caucus and primary dates earlier to protect their "first-in-the-nation" status. There have been proposals in Congress to set up a rotating system of primaries and caucuses for future elections. But many candidates who have participated in the process argue that the tradition should be maintained since it gives candidates with fewer resources a chance to make their case directly to voters in a way that would be impossible in states with larger populations.

In past elections, a large number of states held their primaries on the same Tuesday in March, referred to as "Super Tuesday." With so many elections on the same day, "Super Tuesday" often could make or break a candidacy. But this year, as states moved their primaries and caucuses earlier, "Super Tuesday" has been replaced by what some call "Super-Duper Tuesday." On February 5, 2008, some 22 states, as diverse and geographically far apart as California, New York, Missouri and North Dakota, will hold nominating contests.

Sources:

- <http://www.voanews.com/english/US-Elections-2008.cfm>
- <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uselections08/story/0,,2225786,00.html>
- http://www.vote-smart.org/election_president_how_primary_works.php



© Online Visual Dictionary

A quick glance at the index is all it takes to connect words with images. Explore the 15 major themes to access more than 6,000 images and see words like never before.

INTRODUCING – Visual Dictionary online

Merriam-Webster has teamed up with QA International to launch a new [Online Visual Dictionary](#), which contains information on over 20,000 terms and more than 6,000 illustrations.

You can browse the dictionary by topic (from astronomy to sports & games) or you can do a keyword search of the index, which will suggest words. The Visual Dictionary is designed to help you find the right word at a glance. Filled with stunning illustrations labeled with accurate terminology in up to six languages, it is the ideal language-learning and vocabulary dictionary for use at school, at home or at work. When you know what something looks like but not what it's called, or when you know the word but can't picture the object, The Visual Dictionary has the answer. In a quick look, you can match the word to the image.

Teaching Literature

I am not so lost in lexicography as to forget that words are the daughters of earth, and that things are the sons of heaven.

— Samuel Johnson, Preface to *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755)
The Literature Network: [Samuel Johnson](#)

Words ...

“WOTY season”

The word-of-the-year ritual probably started with the **American Dialect Society**, a scholarly association whose [Web site](#) lists yearly picks as far back as 1990. This year the society will vote in January; its 2006 selection was “plutoed,” which means “to demote or devalue someone or something, as happened to the former planet Pluto.” You are invited to make your own [nomination](#).

Editors at the **New Oxford American Dictionary** recently announced that their word of the year was “**locavore**,” which means someone who eats locally grown food. *Locavore* was coined two years ago by a [group of women](#) in San Francisco who proposed that local residents should try to eat only food grown or produced within a 100-mile radius. Other regional movements have emerged since then.

Webster’s New World Dictionary was the first to offer a word of the year for 2007. It was “**grass station**,” a theoretical place where cars could fill up with ethanol someday in the not-too-distant future.

[Merriam-Webster’s](#) #1 Word of the Year for 2007 based on votes from visitors to its Web site: **w00t** (interjection) - expressing joy (it could be after a triumph, or for no reason at all); similar in use to the word “yay”. This year’s winning word first became popular in competitive online gaming forums as part of what is known as l33t (“leet,” or “elite”) speak—an esoteric computer hacker language in which numbers and symbols are put together to look like letters. Although the double “o” in the word is usually represented by double zeroes, the exclamation is also known to be an acronym for “we owned the other team”—again stemming from the gaming community.

Articles

- [How Dictionaries Define Publicity: The Word of the Year](#). New York Times, Andrew Adam Newman, December 10, 2007
- [Buzzwords 2007: All We Are Saying](#). New York Times, Grant Barrett, December 23, 2007 “New words are most happily received when they arrive without fanfare. When they appear with “ta-da!” or “look what I did!” and are touted as clever or cute, they feel like impositions on our time. We resent that they exist mostly to exalt their makers.”



[Voice of America](#)

Voice of America, which first went on the air in 1942, is a multimedia international broadcasting service funded by the U.S. government through the Broadcasting Board of Governors. VOA offers useful English Learning resources.



[Wordmaster - Explore English](#): A Weekly Analysis of American English featuring grammar, idioms, slang, regional English, etc.



[Special English – Words and Their Stories](#): Five-minute program about words and terms used in everyday American English.



© EDSITEMENT: [Literature & Language Arts](#)

Links

[Bartleby.com](#):

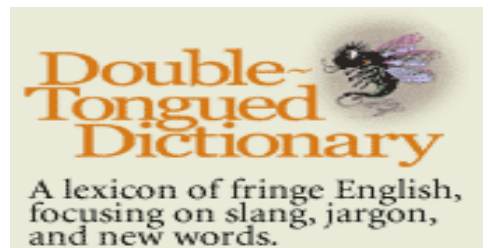
[The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language](#), 4th ed.

Over 90,000 entries feature 10,000 new words and senses, 70,000 audio word pronunciations, 900 full-page color illustrations, language notes and word-root appendixes.

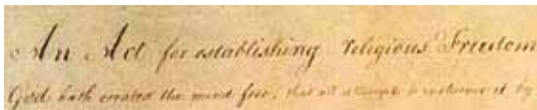
Radio

A Way With Words is a lively hour-long public radio show about language, on the air since 1998. Co-hosts Martha Barnette and Grant Barrett delve into word histories, solve grammar disputes, give and answer quizzes, and take calls from listeners around the world who vent their peeves. And, of course, they answer linguistic and lexical questions that often begin, “I’ve always wondered...”

- [Words of the Year](#): In this episode, Grant Barrett offers a peek at some expressions he’s nominating for the [American Dialect Society’s Word of the Year](#) vote in January. Will it be *w00t*, *subprime*, or something else? ([more...](#))
- [Wordmaster Interview with Grant Barrett: Words of 2007. From ‘Surge’ to ‘Left of Boom’ to ‘E-Mail Bankruptcy’](#)
- Please also see Grant Barrett’s look at “word of the year” contenders in the New York Times article [Buzzwords 2007: All We Are Saying](#).



The [Double-Tongued Dictionary](#) tracks slang, jargon, and new words from the fringes of English.



© PBS: [Religious Freedom](#)

Links

- DoS: [Office of International Religious Freedom](#)
- USINFO: [Principles of Democracy - Freedom of Religion](#); [Religious Freedom Day Marks American Tradition of Good Will](#)
- Merriam-Webster Visual Dictionary: [Chronology of Religions](#)



"Give us the ballot, and we will no longer have to worry the federal government about our basic rights."

Martin Luther King, ["Give Us the Ballot,"](#) Address at the Prayer Pilgrimage for Freedom, May 17, 1957



Webchat Station

WEBCHATS: Media Making Change

January 8, 2008

[New Media Versus Old Media](#)

January 10, 2008

[New Media and U.S. Politics](#)

January 22, 2008

[New Technology, New Voices](#)

- [Register](#)
- [More USinfo Webchats](#)

THIS MONTH

Religious Freedom Day - January 16

On Religious Freedom Day, the United States celebrates the passage of the 1786 Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom and the protection of religious freedom in the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. The Founding Fathers knew the importance of freedom of religion to a stable democracy. Next to the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson took greatest pride in his authorship of the Virginia Statute of Religious Freedom, which, as his friend James Madison said, "extinguished forever the ambitious hope of making laws for the human mind."

Martin Luther King Day – January 21

On the third Monday of January Americans honor the life and achievements of the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. (January 15, 1929 - April 4, 1968), the 1964 Nobel Peace laureate and the individual most associated with the triumphs of the African-American civil rights movement during the 1950s and 1960s. More: USINFO: [Americans Celebrate Achievements of Martin Luther King Jr.](#)

Teaching Resources

- PBS: [Citizen King](#)
- [NMAAHC Interactive Timeline](#). Understand the African American experience from the earliest days of America until the present.

Links

- White House: President's 2008 Proclamation
- White House In Focus: [African American History](#)
- [The Landmark Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.](#)
- USINFO: [Gateway to African American History](#)

NEW eJournal: New Media Making Change

<http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/itgic/1207/ijge/ijge1207.htm>

New media technologies give average citizens access to vast amounts of information and broad networks of people. People can use these tools to pursue social and political agendas of their own making. This edition of eJournal USA shows how this new empowerment is influencing nations in various parts of the world.

EDUCATION USA

Lessons Learned

New Teachers Talk About Their Jobs, Challenges and Long-Range Plans:

[Working Without a Net: How New Teachers from Three Prominent Alternate Route Programs Describe Their First Year on the Job](#)

New teachers in high-needs schools compare traditional teacher education versus three alternate-route programs: Teach for America, Troops to Teachers and The New Teacher Project. According to this survey, alternate route teachers are especially motivated by the desire to help disadvantaged children. At the same time, they are more disheartened by the conditions they find in their classrooms than traditionally-trained teachers. *Lessons Learned is conducted by Public Agenda and the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality.*



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About the USA is a digital collection of background resources on American society, culture, and political processes. In addition to featuring selected websites, it provides access to documents in full text format (E-Texts) on topics ranging from the history of German-American relations, government and politics to travel, holidays and sports.

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