

## St. Nicholas Day

Source: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Saint-Nicholas-Day>

St. Nicholas Day, feast day (December 6) of St. Nicholas, the 4th-century bishop of Myra. St. Nicholas is the patron saint of Russia and Greece, of a number of cities, and of sailors and children, among many other groups, and was noted for his generosity. Some countries celebrate St. Nicholas Day on December 5.

### History

After the Reformation, St. Nicholas was largely forgotten in Protestant Europe, although his memory was kept alive in Holland as Sinterklaas. There St. Nicholas is said to arrive on horseback on his feast day, dressed in a bishop's red robe and mitre and accompanied by Black Peter (Zwarte Piet), variously described as a freed slave or a Moor, to help him distribute sweets and presents to good children or lumps of coal, potatoes, or switches to bad ones. The Dutch took the tradition to New Amsterdam (now New York City) in the American colonies, where he was transformed into Santa Claus by the English-speaking majority. His legend of a kindly old man was united with old Nordic folktales of a magician who punished naughty children and rewarded good children with presents. The resulting image of Santa Claus in the United States crystallized in the 19th century, and he has ever since remained the patron of the gift-giving festival of Christmas. In Britain he was largely replaced with Father Christmas.

### Traditions

In parts of northern Europe, particularly the Low Countries and some German-speaking areas, St. Nicholas Day has remained a time when children are given special cookies, candies, and gifts. In many places, children leave letters for St. Nicholas and carrots or grass for his donkey or horse. In the morning, they find small presents under their pillows or in the shoes, stockings, or plates they have set out for him. Oranges and chocolate coins are common treats that represent St. Nicholas's legendary rescue of three impoverished girls by paying their marriage dowries with gold. Candy canes, which have the shape of a bishop's crosier, are also given. It is thought that over the centuries the legendary St. Nicholas was merged with similar cultural and religious figures. Significant among these were the pagan Knecht Ruprecht and the Roman figure of Befana, as well as the Christ Child (Christkind, or Kris Kringle). A number of countries have traditions in which a malevolent character accompanies St. Nicholas. In France, Père Fouettard, who legend holds tried to cook three boys in a barrel of brine, is said to whip naughty children or give them coal. In Germany, Knecht Ruprecht serves as St. Nicholas's servant and gives children who do not know their prayers sticks, stones, or coal. The terrifying devil-like Krampus is common in many central European counties and carries chains, bells, and sometimes a large basket with which to threaten naughty children.



### December 2023 Calendar

Universal Human Rights Month  
Month of Giving

- 1 – World AIDS Day (International)
- 7 – Hannukah (Judaism)
- 10 – Human Rights Day (International)
- 12 - International Day of Neutrality
- 12 – Day of the Virgin of Guadalupe (Catholicism)
- 17 – Saturnalia (International)
- 18 – International Migrants Day
- 18 – Arabic Language Day (International)
- 20 – Sacagawea Day (US)
- 21 – Winter Solstice (International)
- 25 – Christmas Day (Western Christianity)
- 26– Kwanzaa (International)
- 28 – Holy Innocents Day (Christianity)
- 31 – New Years Eve (International)

## Why bilinguals may have a memory advantage – new research

Source: <https://theconversation.com/why-bilinguals-may-have-a-memory-advantage-new-research-211530>

Think about being in a conversation with your best friend or partner. How often do you finish each other's words and sentences? How do you know what they are going to say before they have said it? We like to think it is romantic intuition, but it's just down to how the human brain works.

In any communication, we generate myriad predictions regarding what we are about to hear. It's just like when we play the game hangman, where we try to predict the target word based on a few letters. To begin with – when we only have one or two letters to go on – the pool of potential candidate words is massive. The more letters we guess correctly, the more the pool of candidate words narrows down, until our brain clicks and we find the right word.

In natural communication, we rarely wait to hear the entire word before we begin to plan what to say back. As soon as we hear the first sounds of a word, our brain uses this information, and together with other clues – such as frequency, context and experience – fills in the blanks, cutting down from a vast list of potential candidate words to predict the target word.

But what if you are a bilingual with languages that have similar sounding words? Well, then, the list of candidate words is much larger. This may sound negative – making it more difficult to predict words. But a new study, published in *Science Advances*, has revealed that this may actually give bilinguals an advantage when it comes to memory.

The languages of a bilingual are interconnected. The same neural apparatus that processes our first language also processes our second language. So it is easy to see why, upon hearing the first sounds of a word, potential candidate words are activated, not only from one language, but from the other one as well.

For instance, upon hearing the sounds “k” and “l”, a Spanish-English bilingual will automatically activate both the words “clock” and “clavo” (nail in Spanish). This means the bilingual has a tougher cutting down job to do in order to settle on the correct word, simply because there is more to cut down to get to the target. It is not surprising then that bilinguals usually take more time to retrieve or recognize words in psychological and linguistic experiments.

### Experimental set up

Consistently having to access competing words from a large pool of candidates may have long-term cognitive consequences. In the new study, Spanish-English bilinguals and English monolinguals heard a word and had to find the correct item among an array of object images, while their eye movements were recorded.

The other objects in the array were manipulated so that they resembled the corresponding word sound of the target item. For instance, when the target word was “beaker”, there were images of objects such as a beetle (whose sounds overlap with beaker) or a speaker (that rhymes with beaker). Participants looked longer at those images than at ones with no overlap (such as carriage).

Increased looking time reflected the fact that observers activated a larger pool of competing labels, which happens when words sound similar. Not surprisingly, bilinguals looked longer at images that overlapped both within and across their languages – meaning they looked longer at more objects than monolinguals.

The study examined whether this kind of cross-language competition leads to better ability in remembering objects. This is because the more objects you look at, the more likely you are to remember them later on.

Participants were required to identify the correct object image after hearing a prompt word. They were then tested on their recognition memory of objects they had previously seen. Participants had to click on a box labelled “old” if they recognized the item and, on a box, labelled “new” if they did not.



The findings showed that recognition memory for objects with many competitors (such as beaker, beetle, speaker) was enhanced relative to items with low competitors (such as carriage) in both monolinguals and bilinguals. In addition, bilinguals showed the effect for cross-language competitors as well (for example clock, clavo) – giving an overall memory advantage.

Interestingly, second language proficiency played a crucial role. The memory advantage was most profound in bilinguals with high second language proficiency than in bilinguals with low second language proficiency and monolinguals. Clearly, to play bilingual hangman efficiently, you need to develop high proficiency in the second language, so that its words become competitors alongside those of the first language.

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The eye tracking data confirmed that items with more competitors were looked at the longest, which led to the memory advantage for those items later on. These findings show that the bilingual cognitive system is highly interactive and can impact other cognitive components such as recognition memory. Other studies also show enhanced memory processing in bilinguals relative to monolinguals in categorization tasks that require suppressing distracting information. This could certainly indicate that bilinguals are more efficient at multi-tasking and more able to focus on the task at hand, especially when the task requires ignoring irrelevant information (think trying to work in a noisy cafe). The picture that emerges is one where bilingualism is a cognitive tool that enhances basic cognitive functions, such as memory and categorization. Bilingual hangman is a tougher game, but one that, ultimately, pays off.

### New Supervisor Profile: Sara Bradbury Manez



Sara Bradbury Manez is the newest addition to the MIS Management team as the dispatch & training supervisor. Sara was born in Swindon, UK. Her family, who are originally from Spain, moved back to Spain when Sara and her twin brother were less than a year old, and that’s where she was raised. She pursued a doctorate in fine arts at the Polytechnic University of Valencia, Spain, and completed a course for clinical diagnosis for laboratory technicians, where she learned medical terminology in Spanish.

Sara moved to the United States nine years ago. When Sara first moved to the U.S. her English was quite rusty, and she initially struggled to adapt to the American way of life. However, through hard work in multiple jobs, she managed to overcome these challenges. She worked at the Sacramento SPCA Spay and Neuter clinic for 5 years, which not only helped her improve her English medical terminology but also made her lose any squeamishness.

After graduating from the ARC Health Care Interpreting program, Sara immediately started working as an on-site interpreter. With the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, she transitioned to becoming a full-time video-remote interpreter. Shortly after, she took on the role in Quality Assurance, of a training coach, and of a supervisor of interpreters. Recently, she was hired at UCD for a similar position and could not be happier! Health Care Interpreting is Sara’s passion!

In her free time, Sara works on private orders of pet portraits. She enjoys reading mystery books and trying all kinds of food.

Welcome onboard to UC Davis Health, Sara! You are a welcome addition of our team!

## 6 Amazing Winter Holidays

<p>TOP LEFT TO RIGHT                  CHANUKAH                  WINTER SOLSTICE                  CHRISTMAS                  BOTTON LEFT TO RIGHT                  KWANZAA                  WATCH NIGHT                  THREE KINGS DAY</p>			
	<p><b>KWANZAA</b></p>		