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**Leap year defined**  
A leap year is a year with 366 days instead of the usual 365. Leap years are necessary because the actual length of a year is 365.2425 days (365 days, five hours, 48 minutes and 46 seconds), not 365 days as commonly recognized. Leap year occurs every four years, with the extra day on February 29.

There is an exception to the every four-year rule. Since the year is slightly less than 365.25 days long, adding an extra day every four years results in around three extra days being added throughout 400 years. Because of this, only one of four of the century years is considered a leap year. In the case of century years, only those divisible by four hundred are considered leap years. For example, the year 2000 was a leap year, but the year 1900 was not.

**The history of leap year**  
Julius Caesar, considered the "father" of leap year, is credited with the origin of adding time to the (Julian) calendar. Prior to this, the early Romans had a 355-day calendar. To keep festivals occurring around the same season each year, a 22- or 23-day month was created every second year. Caesar decided to simplify things and added days to different months of the year to create the 365-day calendar. Although Caesar is credited with this calendar, it was actually his astronomer, Sosigenes, who made the calculations that led to adding an extra day every fourth year, thus creating the leap year.

In 1582, Pope Gregory XIII further refined the (Gregorian) calendar with the rule that leap day would occur in any year divisible by four, with the exception of the century years as mentioned above.

**Leap year trivia and fun facts**  
People born on February 29 are called leaplings or leap-ers. Some famous leaplings include Ann Lee, founder of the Shaker movement; Jimmy Dorsey, jazz musician and big band leader; Dinah Shore, singer and actress; Billy Turner, trainer of Seattle Slew, winner of the 1977 Triple Crown; and Tony Robbins, self-help guru and motivational speaker. Most leaplings

celebrate their birthdays on February 28 or March 1. Many organizations and companies don't really recognize leap day as a valid day. Leaplings are often forced by insurance companies and banks to officially choose the 28th or 1st as their birthday, which could be a big hassle. It could also cause employees who are paid fixed incomes to work for free on February 29, since that day was most likely not calculated into their salary. In addition, prisoners who are serving during a leap year will actually be required to serve an extra day. Legend has it that a leap day is the only day of the year a woman can propose marriage to a man. In fifth century Ireland, St. Bridget complained to St. Patrick that woman had to wait for men to propose. Patrick finally relented and set February 29 aside as the day women could ask for a man's hand in marriage. In Scotland, Queen Margaret, declared that on February 29 a woman could pop the question to any man she fancied. Menfolk who refused were faced with a fine in the form of a kiss, a silk dress, or a pair of gloves that were given to the rejected fair lady. In a more modern tradition, Americans celebrate Sadie Hawkins Day, honoring the "homeliest gal in the hills". This tradition was created by Al Capp in the cartoon strip Li'l Abner, where Sadie and every other woman in town were allowed on that day to pursue and catch the most eligible bachelors in Dogpatch. Although the comic strip placed this day in November, it has become synonymous with February 29.

The first warrants for arrest in the Salem witchcraft trials were issued on February 29, 1692.

Approximately 4.8 million people worldwide have been born on February 29, with the odds of this happening being one in 1,461. With those odds, it is amazing that, according to the Guinness Book of World Records, Norway's three Henriksen siblings were born on three consecutive leap days: Heidi in 1960, Olav in 1964, and Leif-Martin in 1968.

The twin cities of Anthony, Texas and Anthony, New Mexico are the self-proclaimed leap year capitals of the world. They hold a four-day leap year festival each leap year that includes a huge birthday party of all leap year babies. In addition, there is a leap year club. The Honor Society of Leap Year Babies is for those born on February 29, with more than 11,000 people worldwide as members.

In 2020, leap year happens to perfectly line up the major holidays so that Valentine's Day lands on date night Friday and Cinco de Mayo lands on a convenient (Taco) Tuesday. Christmas 2020 and New Years 2021 are also on Fridays, giving a nice 3-day weekend to kick off these holidays.

Compiled by Melinda Starkey, Staff Reporter

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