

# How the Months Got Their Names

Have you ever wondered why the months have such unusual names? They were named by the Romans, so the words for the months have Latin roots. For example, January was named for Janus, the Roman god of gates and doors who had two faces.

At one time February was the last month of the year. In February, the Romans purified themselves to get ready for the new year. The word February comes from a Latin word that means “to purify.”

March was originally the first month of the Roman calendar and comes from the Latin word “martius” which means “change.” Then it meant the change to a new year. Although it is no longer the first month of the year, March does bring a change from winter to spring.

April comes from a Latin word meaning “to open.” In April, Earth opens to the new season of spring.

Some say May was named for Maia, the Roman goddess of spring. Others think May came from a Latin word for “older men” and the month may have been dedicated to elderly men in Rome.

June may have been named for the “juniores,” the younger men, or in honor of Juno, the Roman goddess of marriage.

July, first known as “Quintillis” which means “fifth,” was later changed to Julius to honor Julius Caesar.

Like July, the name for August also changed from “Sextilis,” the sixth month, to Augustus, in honor of the ruler Augustus Caesar.

The words for September, October, November, and December also come from Latin words for numbers. Even when the Romans changed the order of the calendar, they kept the names of these months the same.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# How the Months Got their Names (cont'd)

1. What two months were named for Roman rulers?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. What Latin numbers were used for September, October, November, and December?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. What effect did the change of the Roman Calendar have on the names of the months from September through December?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. What were the original first and last months of the Roman calendar?

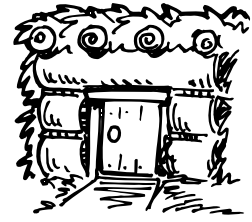
First: \_\_\_\_\_ Last: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Make up a new name for each month. Give a short explanation for each name.

	New Name	Explanation
January	_____	_____
February	_____	_____
March	_____	_____
April	_____	_____
May	_____	_____
June	_____	_____
July	_____	_____
August	_____	_____
September	_____	_____
October	_____	_____
November	_____	_____
December	_____	_____



# Log Cabins



Many of the first homes in the American colonies were small, one-room log cabins. Sometimes a low-ceilinged loft was added over one section as a sleeping area for the children.

Early log cabins were not very large because building a log cabin involved much hard work. The larger the cabin and the higher the walls, the more logs were needed.

First the colonists had to clear the land. They cut tall trees with an ax and stripped all the branches off. Then they hauled the logs to the site and lifted them into place to form the walls. They chinked the cracks between the logs with a mixture of mud and straw.

A fireplace provided heat, light, and a place to cook. A hole in the roof allowed smoke to escape. Tree bark, saplings, or hollow logs were used for the roof. The floors were simply dirt. Windows and doors might be blankets or animal hides stretched to block cold air.

Furniture was simple and often served more than one purpose. Beds could be used as places to sit during the day. Instead of closets, shelves and wooden pegs held most possessions.

Log cabins did not have electricity or indoor plumbing. Water had to be carried in buckets from a spring or well and heated in kettles over the fireplace for cooking, cleaning, washing clothes, and bathing. Instead of a toilet, people used an outhouse.

Complete the chart by making an X in the correct columns to indicate whether the items listed would have been found only in log cabins, only in homes today, or in both.

Items	Only in log cabins	Only in homes today	In both
Fireplace for cooking			
Pots and pans			
Cups and dishes			
Microwave oven			
CD player			
Candles			
Lanterns			
Glass windows			
Tree bark roof			
Dirt floor			
Beds			
Tables and chairs			
Walk-in closets			

# Soapmaking

For thousands of years people made their own soap. The recipe for making soap is quite simple: lye + water + tallow = soap. The process of making soap wasn't quite so simple, nor was it a very pleasant task.

Soapmaking had to be done outdoors because of the strong smells and mess involved. It took most of a day to make one barrel of soap.

To make soap, people first prepared tallow from cooking grease and animal fat, a process called rendering. They put the grease and fat in a large kettle over an outdoor fire. It took about 20 to 25 pounds of fat and grease to make enough tallow for one barrel of soap.

After cooking the fat and grease with water, they skimmed off the grease that floated to the top, then strained the grease to remove impurities. This process had to be done two or three times before the tallow could be used.



To obtain lye, the other main ingredient in soap, they poured hot water through a tub filled with ashes, called a leach barrel. As the water filtered through the ashes out a hole in the barrel, it formed lye. It took five or six large buckets of ashes to produce enough lye for one barrel of soap.

Working with lye is dangerous. Lye causes terrible burns to the skin or eyes. Fumes can burn the lungs. If swallowed, lye is poison.

When lye and tallow were mixed with water and boiled, they formed a jelly-like substance called soft soap. Stored in a barrel until needed, this soap was used for bathing and washing clothes.

1. State the main idea of "Soapmaking." \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What ingredients were needed to make soap?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Why was soapmaking done outdoors? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Why was soapmaking dangerous? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_