

## Learn About Groundhog Day

Groundhog Day is a holiday celebrated on February 2<sup>nd</sup>. According to folklore, if it is cloudy when the groundhog emerges from its burrow, the groundhog will leave the burrow, signaling that winter will soon end. If it is not cloudy, the groundhog will see its shadow and retreat back into the burrow. Winter will continue for six more weeks.

Groundhog Day began as a Pennsylvania Dutch tradition in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (1700s and 1800s). In Pennsylvania today, you can see official Groundhog Day early morning festivals. You can enjoy special food, hear speeches, and even watch a g'spiel (play or skit). You might find that only the Pennsylvania German dialect is spoken. Those who speak English at the event pay a penalty, usually a coin per English word spoken, to a bowl at the center of the table.

### Vocabulary

Folklore: traditional beliefs, legends, customs or traditions of a group of people

Groundhog: a North American burrowing rodent that hibernates in the winter

Burrow: a hole or tunnel in the ground made by a rabbit or other small creature, to serve as a home or hiding place

Retreat: to withdraw into safety or privacy

Pennsylvania Dutch: descendants of Germanic people who came to the U.S. from Germany and Switzerland. Dutch is a variation on “Deutsch,” meaning German, and was misunderstood by the English-speaking community to mean the people were Dutch—from Holland

Penalty: a punishment for breaking a rule or law

### Answer in complete sentences.

1. The National Climate Data Center shows that the accuracy rate of the groundhog's forecast is only 39%. Why do you think people celebrate Groundhog Day anyway?

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2. Why do you think there is a fine for speaking English at Pennsylvania Dutch Groundhog Day events? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. Would you like to attend an official Groundhog Day ceremony? Why or why not?

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A groundhog is also called a woodchuck. Try this tongue twister!  
“How much wood would a woodchuck chuck if a woodchuck could chuck wood?”