

The Equinox

Twice a year, day and night fall into perfect balance on the equinox.

What is the equinox? The word equinox comes from Latin *aequus* (equal) and *nox* (night). On the equinox, the hours of dark and light are nearly equal.

Why does the equinox happen? The equinox occurs when the earth's axis of rotation is perpendicular to the line connecting the centers of the earth and the sun. Earth is pointing neither toward nor away from the sun.

Why is the equinox important? The equinox marks the beginning of two seasons: spring and fall. The spring or vernal equinox marks spring; the autumnal or fall equinox marks fall.

Are day and night different after the equinox? After the spring equinox, the days are longer than the nights. After the fall equinox, the days are shorter than the nights.

What about summer and winter? An important event marks the beginning of summer and winter: the solstice. The summer solstice is the longest day of the year. The winter solstice is the longest night of the year.

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1. The equinox occurs when the earth's axis of rotation is _____ to the line connecting the centers of the _____ and _____.
 2. After the spring equinox, the days are _____ than the nights.
After the fall equinox, the days are _____ than the nights.
 3. Equinox comes from two Latin words: _____ meaning _____ and _____ meaning _____.
 4. The equinox marks the beginning of _____ and _____.
 5. The solstice marks the beginning of _____ and _____.
 6. How is the solstice different from the equinox? _____

 7. In writing this piece, do you think the author intended to inform, entertain, or persuade? _____