

Can you skip a day?

The Philippines in 1844 and Samoa in 2011: two decisions help pupils distinguish passing time from the dates used to count it.

Age: 12 and above. **Time:** 45 minutes. **Format:** pairs, then class discussion. No knowledge of time zones is needed.

Preparation

Print pages 2 and 3 for each pair. Keep page 4 for marking. Pupils only need pencils; online sources are optional extensions.

Learning goals

- Reconstruct two local calendar changes.
- Distinguish a skipped date from time physically disappearing.
- Use documents to answer questions and identify what remains unknown.

Lesson plan

1. **5 minutes.** Ask what happened to Samoa's Friday. Record initial ideas.
2. **12 minutes.** Read the cards and complete the calendars on page 2.
3. **13 minutes.** Solve the cases on page 3, citing a card.
4. **10 minutes.** Compare answers using page 4.
5. **5 minutes.** Each pupil writes what changed and what they cannot claim.

Assessment: one mark for each correct calendar (2), one for distinguishing date from passing time (1), one for each evidence-based case (3). Total: 6 marks. Assess reasoning, not just answers.

Support: read the cards aloud and complete the first calendar together. **Extension:** open a source and find the passage supporting an answer.

Rebuild the two calendars

Name: _____ Date: _____

Card A · The Philippines

Narciso Clavería’s decree, dated 16 August 1844, ordered Tuesday, 31 December of that year to be omitted. Monday the 30th was to be followed by Wednesday, 1 January 1845.

Source: Benko, 1890, pp. 13–14. This reproduces a copy certified in 1889, not a photograph of the original 1844 decree.

Card B · Samoa

Thursday, 29 December 2011 was followed by Saturday the 31st. Friday the 30th was skipped in the local calendar. This change affected Samoa; it does not mean the whole world skipped a day.

Source: Guidance Bulletin 31, 2012, p. 1.

1. Fill in the calendars without the skipped date

Place	Last date before the jump	Date that followed	Skipped date
Philippines	Monday 30 Dec 1844	_____ _____	_____
Samoa	Thursday 29 Dec 2011	_____ _____	_____

2. Explain in your own words

A classmate says: “For 24 hours, nothing happened in Samoa because that day did not exist.” How would you respond?

Hint: consider the difference between sleeping, eating or working and the date written on a calendar.

What happened to people's pay?

Card C · Samoa's rules

Section 8 of Samoa's 2011 law protected pay and allowances for employees who would normally have worked the hours lost on the skipped day. Section 7 excluded the skipped date from daily interest calculations on loans.

Teaching summary of sections 7–8, not a quotation. These rules apply to Samoa's 2011 change.

3. Solve each case and cite a card

1. Ana would normally have worked those hours on the skipped Friday in Samoa. Did skipping the date allow her pay and allowances for those hours to be withheld? Which rule answers this?

-
2. A loan in Samoa charged interest by the day. Should the skipped date have been included?

-
3. Can we be sure that pay was protected in exactly the same way in the Philippines in 1844? What evidence would you need?

4. Exit sentence

Complete: "Both places changed _____. To understand the consequences for a contract, I need _____."

Answers and sources

Calendars

Philippines: Wednesday, 1 January 1845 followed; Tuesday, 31 December 1844 was skipped. **Samoa:** Saturday, 31 December 2011 followed; Friday the 30th was skipped.

The explanation

Life and time continued. What changed was the date assigned to the following day in each place. There was no physical interval in which time disappeared.

The three cases

1. The skipped date could not be used to withhold Ana's pay and allowances for the hours she would normally have worked. Card C, section 8.
2. No. The skipped date was excluded from those daily interest calculations. Card C, section 7.
3. No. A 2011 law from Samoa cannot establish the rules in the Philippines in 1844. We would need Philippine documents about payments, contracts or implementation.

Possible exit sentence: "Both places changed their local calendar. To understand the consequences for a contract, I need a rule or document that applies to that place and time."

Check the sources

1. Benko, Das Datum auf den Philippinen (1890), pp. 13–14
https://books.google.com/books?id=TJ_upxbo_IcC&pg=PA13
2. International Date Line Act 2011, Samoa, ss. 7–8 (official 2023 text)
<https://www.ag.gov.ws/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/International-Date-Line-Act-2011.pdf>
3. US Department of State, Guidance Bulletin 31 (2012), p. 1
https://data.geodata.state.gov/guidance/DoS_Bulletin_31-International-Dateline-2012.pdf

Limit: the printed copy establishes the wording of the Philippine decree, but not everyone's personal experience or a complete line across the ocean. Ana and the loan are fictional classroom cases based on documented rules.