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All in all a good day

Young woman with a raised fist protesting in the street For most of the world outside of the United States, Labour Day — a slightly different spelling than we're accustomed to in the U.S. — takes place on May 1 every year, not during the first weekend of September. Some countries call it May Day or International Workers' Day, but the celebration commemorates the same concept. And while our Labor Day does fall later in the year, May Day is something that folks across the US show up for on May 1st. On this day, people around the world celebrate with political demonstrations, often organized by labor unions and socialist groups. These demonstrations are not just to honor the historical struggles of the working class, but to continue to push for improvements in workers' rights. But how did the holiday get its start, and what's the significance of May? As it turns out, Labour Day is multifaceted in meaning and represents some vital history. The Early Days of Workers' Rights in Australia Inspired the Holiday Before the 19th century, nothing that we'd think of today as workers' rights actually existed. Toiling for a grueling 14 or even 16 hours a day was the norm. It wasn't until the early 1830s that the first labor unions were formed in Australia. These were associations of skilled laborers: shearers, stonemasons, cabinet-makers, shipwrights and plasterers. Much like today, wealthy employers and the government were against early labor unions. Photo Courtesy: John Seaton Callahan/Getty Images However, these groups still fought for better working conditions by striking and demanding shorter working hours for each day. In 1844, they initiated the Early Closing Movement, in which they fought to reduce the length of the workday from 14 to 12 hours. It was, in part, the circumstances in Australia at the time that helped with labor unions' early success. In the late 1700s, Australia's workforce was primarily made up of convict laborers arriving from England. By 1840, transportation of convicts to the New South Wales colony came to a halt, and by 1847, the Anti-Transportation League — a group that was against the relocation of convicted criminals from Britain to the Australian colony — had formed. Just a few years later in 1852, they successfully ended convict transportation to Australia's east coast. With no new forced laborers arriving, and with other residents venturing to North America to participate in the gold rushes there, the New South Wales colony faced labor shortages throughout the 1850s. Additionally, many laborers left to work in Australia's own then-recently opened goldfields. This demand for labor gave workers and unions more bargaining advantage as they fought for shorter hours and better working conditions. On April 21, 1856, Melbourne stonemasons walked off their jobs and went on strike after their employers refused to listen to their demands for fewer working hours each day. The employers had no choice but to negotiate, eventually leading to an agreement. The stonemasons achieved what they were fighting for: an eight-hour-maximum workday. Despite the victories of the stonemasons in Melbourne, the struggle for workers' rights continued around the world for many years. In the 19th century, working conditions in the United States were so horrific that writers like Upton Sinclair and Jack London wrote novels bringing attention to the abysmal working conditions of laborers. It was not uncommon that they worked up to 16 hours a day in unsafe conditions. Photo Courtesy: Grafissimo/Getty Images While workers began to put up a fight for shorter working hours by the 1860s, it wasn't until two decades later that labor unions began specifically demanding an eight-hour workday. Their employers wouldn't budge, so laborers took it upon themselves to make the change. May 1, 1886, was the day the Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions decided the eight-hour workday would go into effect and become the standard for all laborers. By way of union organizing, a general strike involving hundreds of thousands of laborers rallied and protested across the U.S. In Chicago alone, as many as 40,000 workers took to the streets, walking out on their jobs to join marches. While most of the protesting was peaceful, by May 3, violence had begun to erupt when some workers surrounded strikebreakers trying to leave a factory. This led police to fire shots into the crowd, killing several people. Labor activists and union workers held a rally in Haymarket Square on May 4 to express their outrage. Again, the demonstration began peacefully but later escalated to violence while a British socialist named Samuel Fielden was speaking. As police tried to break up the crowd, someone lobbed a homemade bomb at them. One officer died immediately, and six others were mortally wounded. Gunfire between police and demonstrators ensued. Multiple police officers and demonstrators died as a result of what became known as the Haymarket Affair or Haymarket Riot. An additional 60 police officers were hurt, along with dozens of demonstrators. The official number of demonstrators wounded is unknown, as many forewent medical treatment in fear of being arrested afterward for their participation in the riot. How Did Labour Day Become an Official Holiday? May 1 became the official International Workers' Day in 1889 during the first International Socialist Congress in Paris. Three years after the Haymarket Affair, this day was chosen in remembrance of the event between striking workers and police in Chicago. Photo Courtesy: Giuseppe Manfra/Getty Images As a result of violent protests continuing in subsequent years throughout the United States, the International Socialist Congress of 1904 declared that May Day would no longer be a workday. The group called on all trade unions and Social-Democratic Party organizations to demonstrate on May 1 until a maximum eight-hour workday became law. This limit didn't officially come into practice for many workers until 1938, when President Franklin Roosevelt signed the Fair Labor Standards Act, requiring those who worked more than 40 hours per week to be paid overtime wages. It also established a minimum wage, youth employment standards and recordkeeping. Workers' rights have never ceased to be a global issue, and workers' voices will always deserve dignity. To reflect both workers' progress and the continued need to fight for standards and fairness, much of the world still recognizes International Workers' Day, or Labour Day, on May 1. Why Does the United States Celebrate Labor Day in September? May 1 became the official date to commemorate workers internationally because that date honored a far-reaching strike that took place in the United States. Therefore, it may seem strange that the U.S. doesn't celebrate its Labor Day on May 1, instead marking it on the first Monday in September. But, there's a reason for this. Photo Courtesy: LordHenriVoton/Getty Images Despite spurring progress for workers, the Haymarket Affair was difficult for many Americans to process because of the violent ways police officers handled the events that May. To complicate things further, public trials of eight "anarchist activists" followed the riot, and they were found guilty of murdering the police officer who died immediately when the bomb was thrown into the crowd that day. The judge sentenced seven of them to death, and one was given 15 years in jail. However, their supposed involvement in the bombing was never proven, thus making the Haymarket Affair a contentious event for Americans to memorialize. As such, May 1 wasn't seen as a time of celebration for many people in the U.S. even before it became the official international Labour Day. To try to minimize the chances of glorifying violence that happened during the Haymarket Affair, and to prevent further violence or sympathy with socialism, President Grover Cleveland established Labor Day in the United States as the first weekend in September in 1894. Still, demonstrations continue to occur on May Day in the U.S. The labor movement is alive and well (and fighting a creative fight). You might see people on the street this May 1st advocating for a reduction to the 40 hour work week, among other things. Now you can understand these people as more than just protestors, but as part of a long-fought, historical struggle. Whether a country calls it Labour Day, Workers' Day or another name, its purpose remains the same: to uplift workers, recognize their struggle and celebrate labor movements that strive tirelessly to secure basic human rights. MORE FROM REFERENCE.COM In the old days, telling someone to have a nice day was a perfectly good way to end a conversation. Now, "nice" seems old-fashioned, weirdly formal, and just plain insufficient. We're used to hearing "have a great day." Anything less could almost be considered a slight. Of course, now even "great" doesn't seem that, well, great. Here are some ideas on how to wish someone a great day without sounding like you're just phoning it in. The following sayings range from sweetly sincere to downright goofy, but all in all, we think they're pretty great. Sincere To start off, here are some heartfelt ways to wish someone a great day. Just wanted to pop in and wish you the Best Day Ever! Hope you have a shockingly good day. If anyone deserves it, it's you! Have an extra-special, amazingly fun, undeniably awesome, super fantastic day! Have a good morning and a fantastic day! There's only one thing I need you to do for me: Have a wonderful day! Hope your day is flippin' awesome! Have a glorious day and a blessed week! Wishing the best day ever to one of the best people ever! Hope your day is as awesome as you are. May your day be full of sunshine and laughter. Funny One way to ensure someone has a great day is to leave them laughing. With that in mind, here are some humorous well-wishes. As the pizza said to the cheese, have a grate day! I'd wish you the best day ever, but then it would be all downhill from here. So just have a great day, okay? Have a great day… or at least as great as it can be given that I won't be around. May your day be relatively asshole-free. Hope your day doesn't suck! Have a stupid good day. I'd wish you the best day ever, but you have to work so that's probably not going to happen. So… have a moderately decent day! Hope you have a great day, but if it's bad, I hope it's bad in a funny way that you can tell me about later! Romantic Finally, here are some ideas on how to say "have a great day" to a very special someone. For more ideas along these lines, see our sweet love messages for her and him. You are my sunshine. Have a great day! Have a wonderful day, and know that I'll be thinking about you every second. The best part of my day is knowing I get to see you at the end of it. Have a great day, baby! Have a beautiful day, beautiful. Until you're back in my loving arms… have a wonderful day! May your day be as sweet as your smile. Just wanted to remind you that you're an amazing person. Now go have yourself an amazing day! Have a wonderful day, and never forget that I love the hell out of you. Three things: I love you, you're amazing, and I hope you have the best day ever! See you later, sweetie. Hope your day is half as nice as that butt of yours.

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