

# Origins of Words

oct

=

eight

aqua

=

water

pent

=

five

astro

=

star

## Origins of Words

In *Windy Winterbottom and the Dungeon of Pongs*, Professor Sayama arrived in Canada a decade ago from Japan. Not a decathlon ago, nor a decagon ago. Not even a December ago, because he arrived in August.

Those three letters at the start of some words - *dec* - come from Greek and mean ten. It does not always work however, because *decarbonate*, to take the fizz out of a drink, just means that and ten is not involved at all.

So...Professor Sayama came to Canada twelve minus two years ago. He did ever so like the number ten. At university, he had been a substitute for Japan's Olympic team in the decathlon - an athletic contest with ten different events. He created a jigsaw where all the pieces were a ten sided shape with ten angles - a decagon. Each piece had even been a decimetre in width, a not so often used unit of measure equal to ten centimetres. And not surprisingly, Professor Sayama was born in December, the month that had once been the tenth of the year, but someone had moved them all about and was now the twelfth.

English words have entered many languages, for example, "le weekend" in French or カメラ (camera) in Japanese. However, English is made from different languages itself, like Latin, Greek and French. If you know some of the meanings of those Latin, Greek or French words, you can work out what they mean in English.

The word **astro** is *Greek* for **star**. In English an **astronaut** travels to space towards the stars. **Astronomy** is the study of the stars and planets.

The word **tele** comes from the *Greek* word for **far**. When you watch television, pictures have been transmitted from a faraway place into your home. A **telephone** helps you hear someone from a distance.

The words *aqua*, *aquae* are *Latin* for water. What do the following words with *aqua* in mean?

Word	Meaning
aquaculture	
aquamarine	
aquaphobia	
aquarium	
aquatic	

Some prefixes in English have the same meaning in both Greek and Latin, e.g. octo - eight, dec - ten. If you know these prefixes you will know the word has something to do with a certain number.

In English we interchange Greek and Latin prefixes for the same number. For example, **heptathlon** is a sporting contest made up of **seven** events (**hepta** originates from the Greek meaning **seven**). **Septuplets** are seven babies born at one birth (**septem** is Latin for seven). Long ago, **September** used to be the seventh month of the year when the calendar only had ten months. However, when January and February were added and the calendar became twelve months, September was moved. **October** was once the eighth month (**octo** is Latin for eight), **November** the ninth (**novem** is Latin for nine) and **December** the tenth (**decem** is Latin for ten).

The following 'Origins of Words' dictionary activity helps us think about where words originate and their meanings. It focuses upon cross-curricular links, connecting the names of geometric shapes to recognizing Latin and Greek prefixes.

This activity helps build sophisticated vocabulary and dictionary skills.

## English Words from Greek numbers

A **heptathlon** is a sporting contest made up of seven events (100 metres hurdles, shot put, high jump, long jump, javelin throw, 200 metres sprint and 800 metres run). **Hepta** comes from the **Greek** meaning **seven**. A **heptagon** is a seven sided 2D shape. A **heptahedron** is a 3D object with seven faces.

Look through a dictionary to find other words starting with *pent*, *hex*, *oct* and *dec*. The beginning of the words must have a numerical meaning. Please find two new words for each. *Tri* is done for you as an example.

Shape	Number of Sides	Other words beginning with...
triangle	3	<u>Tricolour</u> - a flag with three colours. <u>Tricycle</u> - a vehicle with three wheels.
pentagon		
hexagon		
octagon		
decagon		

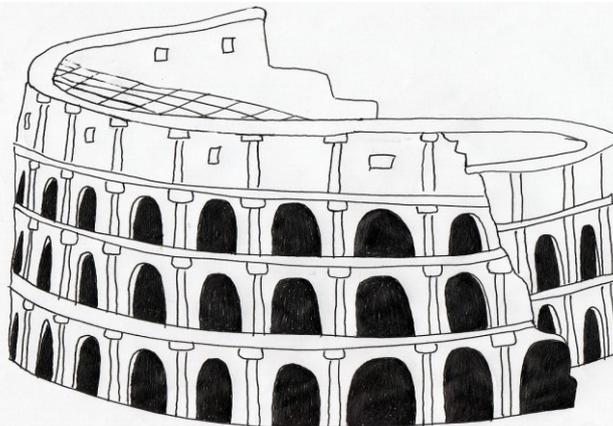
# Origins of the Calendar

According to Ancient Roman legends...



Romulus and his twin brother Remus were left in a river after they were born and saved by a she-wolf.

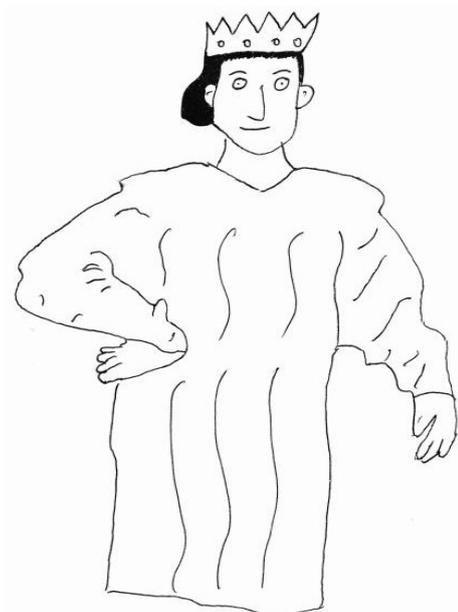
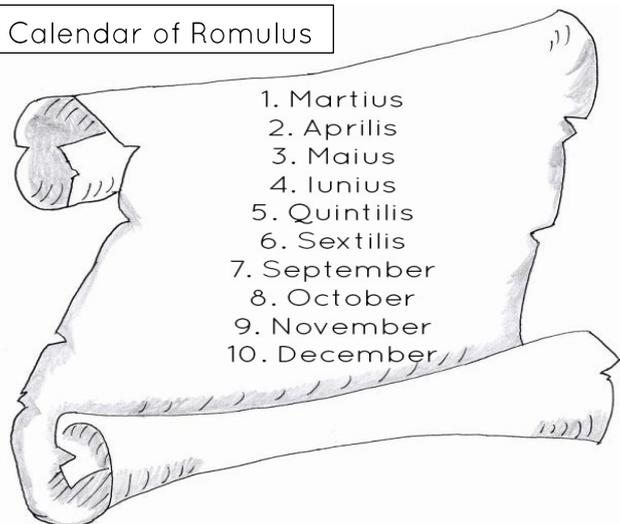
Romulus later founded Rome, naming it after himself and becoming its first king.



Around 753 years before the birth of Jesus Christ, Romulus created the original calendar. It only had 10 months and 304 days, starting with March.

This coincides with the spring equinox, the birth of nature, when flowers begin to bloom.

Calendar of Romulus



Numa Pompilius, the second king of Rome, changed the calendar of Romulus about 40 years later. He added January and February to the beginning of the year, therefore moving all the months.



Calendar of Numa Pompilius