

# Regnal years of English monarchs

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The **regnal years of English monarchs** are the official regnal years of the monarchs of the Kingdom of England from 1066, the Kingdom of Great Britain from May 1707 to January 1801, and the United Kingdom since January 1801. The regnal calendar ("nth year of the reign of King X", abbreviated to "*n* X", etc.) continues to be used in many official British government and legal documents of historical interest, notably parliamentary statutes.

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## Overview

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For centuries, English official public documents have been dated according to the regnal years of the ruling monarch. Traditionally, parliamentary statutes are referenced by regnal year, e.g. the Occasional Conformity Act 1711 is officially referenced as "10 Anne c. 6" (read as "the sixth chapter of the statute of the parliamentary session that sat in the 10th year of the reign of Queen Anne"). In the event of a second session, or a second Parliament, in the same regnal year the chapter numbering would reset. As a result, either an "s. 2" or "sess. 2" to indicate the second session, or an "Stat. 2" to indicate a second Parliament would be added. For example, the Queen Regent's Prerogative Act 1554 is cited as "1 Mary s. 3 c. 1" because it was the first act passed in the third session of the parliament begun in the first year of the reign of Queen Mary, and the Riot Act is cited as "1 Geo 1 Stat. 2. c. 5.", being the fifth act passed in the second parliament of the first year of the reign of George I.

Regnal years are calculated from the official date (year, month and day) of a monarch's accession. For example, King George III acceded on 25 October 1760. That marks the beginning of his first regnal year. His second regnal year starts on 25 October 1761, his third regnal year on 25 October 1762, and so on. When a monarch dies, abdicates or is deposed, the regnal year comes to an end (whether the full year has run its course or not). A new regnal year begins from a new date, with a new monarch.

As different monarchs begin their reigns at different times, the exact month and day when a regnal year begins varies across reigns. For example, Elizabeth I's regnal year starts on 17 November, James I's on 24 March, Charles I's on 27 March, and so on.

The regnal year is distinct from the official "legal year" – that is, the calendar used for legal, civic and ecclesiastical purposes. The legal year also did not always coincide with the start date for the historical year. Until the 13th century, the English legal year began at Christmas (25 December). From the 14th century

until 1752, the legal year began on 25 March. It is only since 1752 that the legal year was re-set to coincide with the start of the historical calendar year (1 January) (see Calendar (New Style) Act 1750).<sup>[1]</sup>

These date differences can also be confusing when sorting dates in old documents before 1753. For example, the reign of Charles I came to an end with his execution on 30 January 1649, but contemporary legal records such as the House of Commons Journals record this as 30 January 1648.<sup>[2]</sup> To account for this complication, it is customary for historians referring to legal events between 1 January and 25 March to write the year down in "double-barreled" format (e.g. "30 January 1648–49", the former being the legal year, the latter the historical year).

The regnal years listed below are given in normal historical date (not legal year). So a parliamentary statute that was passed on, say, 10 February 1585 (in normal calendar date) would be dated in the official record as 10 February 1584 (the legal year), and simultaneously said to have been passed in the 27th year of Elizabeth I (the regnal year that started on 17 November 1584).<sup>[1]</sup>

The 1750 Act reforming the legal year also officially introduced to England the Gregorian calendar on Thursday 14 September 1752. Up until then, England had been using the Julian calendar, which by that time was eleven days behind the calendar of most countries on the European Continent. So events before 1752 in English records often differ from European records, and it is sometimes necessary to refer to both sets of dates using "Old Style" (Julian) and "New Style" (Gregorian) notation, e.g. William of Orange's armada landed in England on 5 November 1688 (OS) or 15 November 1688 (NS) (see Old Style and New Style dates). The dates in the table below follow the English calendar (OS until 1752, NS thereafter).

The following table gives the dates of the regnal years for Kings of England (and subsequently Great Britain), from 1066 to the present day.<sup>[3]</sup> These are official *de jure* dates, and may or may not coincide with whether a particular king had *de facto* power or not at that time. For example, as the Commonwealth era was suppressed in the official record, the regnal years of Charles II are measured from 30 January 1649 (the day his father Charles I was executed); as a result, when Charles II actually became king, on 29 May 1660, he was already in his 12th regnal year. (For the *de facto* tabulation of English rulers, see any conventional list of English monarchs.)

## Regnal calendar table

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To calculate the regnal year from a particular date, one subtracts the first regnal year from the calendar year in question. The year is not adjusted if the month and day falls before the regnal date, and if it falls on or after the regnal date, add one. Finally – for the regnal year of William III after Mary's death (that is, from 28 December 1694 onwards) – one also adds 6.

- Example 1: 4 July 1776. This falls in the reign of George III, whose first regnal year is 1760; so  $1776 - 1760 = 16$ th year of his reign (4 July is before 25 October).
- Example 2: 2 May 1662. This is in the reign of Charles II, whose first regnal year is 1649. So  $1662 - 1649 = 13$ , add 1 because 2 May is after 30 January, so the date falls in the 14th regnal year of Charles II.
- Example 3: 31 December 1695. This falls in the reign of William III alone (after Mary's death), whose "first" regnal year is 1694; so  $1695 - 1694 = 1$ , add 1 because 31 December is after 28 December, and also add 6 because the date is after Mary's death (on 27 December), so the date falls in the "8th" year of his reign.

Monarch	No. of years	First regnal year	Regnal year start date	Regnal year end date	End of final year
<u>William I</u>	21	1066	14 October	13 October	9 Sep 1087
<u>William II</u>	13	1087	26 September	25 September	2 Aug 1100
<u>Henry I</u>	36	1100	5 August	4 August	1 Dec 1135
<u>Stephen</u>	19	1135	26 December	25 December	25 Oct 1154
<u>Henry II</u>	35	1154	19 December	18 December	6 Jul 1189
<u>Richard I</u>	10	1189	3 September	2 September	6 Apr 1199
<u>John</u>	18	1199	May (Ascension Day) <sup>[a]</sup>	May (varied)	19 Oct 1216
<u>Henry III</u>	57	1216	28 October	27 October	16 Nov 1272
<u>Edward I</u>	35	1272	20 November	20 November <sup>[b]</sup>	7 Jul 1307
<u>Edward II</u>	20	1307	8 July	7 July	20 Jan 1327
<u>Edward III</u>	51 (England), 38 (France) <sup>[c]</sup>	1327	25 January	24 January	21 Jun 1377
<u>Richard II</u>	23	1377	22 June <sup>[d]</sup>	21 June	29 Sep 1399
<u>Henry IV</u>	14	1399	30 September	29 September	20 Mar 1413
<u>Henry V</u>	10	1413	21 March	20 March	31 Aug 1422
<u>Henry VI</u>	39 + 1 <sup>[e]</sup>	1422	1 September	31 August	4 Mar 1461
<u>Edward IV</u>	23	1461	4 March	3 March	9 Apr 1483
<u>Edward V</u>	1	1483	9 April	25 June	25 Jun 1483
<u>Richard III</u>	3	1483	26 June	25 June	22 Aug 1485
<u>Henry VII</u>	24	1485	22 August	21 August	21 Apr 1509
<u>Henry VIII</u>	38	1509	22 April	21 April	28 Jan 1547
<u>Edward VI</u>	7	1547	28 January	27 January	6 Jul 1553
<u>Mary I</u>	2	1553	6 July <sup>[f]</sup>	5 July	24 Jul 1554 <sup>[g]</sup>
" <u>Philip and Mary</u> "	5 & 6 <sup>[g]</sup>	1554	25 July	24 July	17 Nov 1558
<u>Elizabeth I</u>	45	1558	17 November	16 November	24 Mar 1603
<u>James I</u>	23	1603	25 March <sup>[h]</sup>	24 March	27 Mar 1625
<u>Charles I</u>	24	1625	27 March	26 March	30 Jan 1649
<u>Charles II</u>	37 <sup>[i]</sup>	1649	30 January	29 January	6 Feb 1685
<u>James II</u>	4	1685	6 February	5 February	11 Dec 1688 <sup>[j]</sup>
" <u>William and Mary</u> "	6	1689	13 February <sup>[k]</sup>	12 February	27 Dec 1694
<u>William III</u>	8 (7 to 14) <sup>[l]</sup>	1694	28 December <sup>[l]</sup>	27 December	8 March 1702

<u>Anne</u>	13	1702	8 March	7 March	1 August 1714
<u>George I</u>	13	1714	1 August	31 July	11 June 1727
<u>George II</u>	34	1727	11 June	10 June	25 October 1760
<u>George III</u>	60 <sup>[m]</sup>	1760	25 October	24 October	29 January 1820
<u>George IV</u>	11 <sup>[n]</sup>	1820	29 January	28 January	26 June 1830
<u>William IV</u>	7	1830	26 June	25 June	20 June 1837
<u>Victoria</u>	64	1837	20 June	19 June	22 January 1901
<u>Edward VII</u>	10	1901	22 January	21 January	6 May 1910
<u>George V</u>	26	1910	6 May	5 May	20 January 1936
<u>Edward VIII</u>	1	1936	20 January	11 December	11 December 1936
<u>George VI</u>	16	1936	11 December	10 December	5 February 1952 <sup>[4]</sup>
<u>Elizabeth II</u>	71	1952	6 February	5 February	8 September 2022
<u>Charles III</u>	Ongoing	2022	8 September	7 September	

## See also

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- Citation of United Kingdom legislation
- Acts of Parliament Numbering and Citation Act 1962
- List of English monarchs
- List of British monarchs

## Notes

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a. John of England's regnal years are unusual for not starting on the same date every year, but rather on Ascension Day, a movable feast of the liturgical calendar. Start dates for John's regnal years are (Sweet & Maxwell's Guide 1962, p. 23):

- Year 1 – 27 May 1199
- Year 2 – 18 May 1200
- Year 3 – 3 May 1201
- Year 4 – 23 May 1202
- Year 5 – 15 May 1203
- Year 6 – 3 June 1204
- Year 7 – 19 May 1205
- Year 8 – 11 May 1206
- Year 9 – 31 May 1207
- Year 10 – 15 May 1208
- Year 11 – 7 May 1209

- Year 12 – 27 May 1210
- Year 13 – 12 May 1211
- Year 14 – 3 May 1212
- Year 15 – 23 May 1213
- Year 16 – 8 May 1214
- Year 17 – 28 May 1215
- Year 18 – 19 May 1216

- b. Edward I's regnal years are unusual for starting and ending on the same day (20 November), rather than ending one day, and starting the next.
- c. Edward III is given two different regnal years, one for England, and another for France (the only claimant for whom this is done). English years are unbroken between 1327 and 1377. French years are counted from the start date of 25 January 1340 (beginning of Year 1 France and Year 14 England), and interrupted on 8 May 1360 (end of Year 21 France); the French numbering resumes on 11 June 1369 as beginning of French Year 30, and follows the English start/end dates (25/24 January) thereafter until 21 June 1377, the end of English year 51 and French year 38.
- d. From Richard II onwards, every new king's regnal year begins exactly on the day on or after the end of the previous king's reign (previous transitions often had a gap of several days, sometimes weeks). Henceforth, in official terms, "England always has a king", i.e. there will not be a day in subsequent English history without a reigning monarch (with the exception of the Glorious Revolution of 1688–1689; see below).
- e. Henry VI was deposed by Edward IV on 4 March 1461, officially bringing his reign and last regnal year to a close. However, Henry VI briefly recovered the throne in 1470–1471, so he has an extra regnal year, dated from 9 October 1470 to c. April 1471, and referred to as the 49th year ("Anno ab inchoatione regni nostri") or 1st year of restoration ("Readeptionis nostrae regiae potestatis"). Henry VI's "restoration" year does not mar the continuity of Edward IV's regnal years – Edward IV's 10th Year is counted unbroken as beginning from 4 March 1470 and ending 3 March 1471, his 11th year beginning 4 March 1471, etc.
- f. Lady Jane Grey, the "Nine Days Queen", who was Queen Jane from 6 July 1553 to 17 July 1553, is not present in the official record. Mary I's reign officially begins on 6 July 1553.
- g. Mary I married the Habsburg prince Philip (future Philip II of Spain) on 25 July 1554, who was promptly made co-ruler of England. Their joint reign is officially referred to as "Philip and Mary", but the numbering of their regnal years is not reset to 1 for both, but rather retained separately for each. So the first year of "Philip and Mary", which begins on 25 July 1554, is officially referred to as "1 & 2" (1st year of Philip, 2nd year of Mary). There is the complication, of course, that Mary's previous regnal year began on 6 July, a few weeks before Philip's start date of 25 July. So the numbers between those two days are adjusted. Taken continuously, the regnal year numbers are:

- 1 Mary : 6 July 1553 – 5 Jul 1554
- 2 Mary : 6 Jul 1554 – 24 Jul 1554
- 1 & 2 Philip and Mary : 25 Jul 1554 – 5 Jul 1555
- 1 & 3 Philip and Mary: 6 Jul 1555 – 24 Jul 1555
- 2 & 3 Philip and Mary; 25 Jul 1555 – 5 Jul 1556
- 2 & 4 Philip and Mary: 6 Jul 1556 – 24 Jul 1556
- 3 & 4 Philip and Mary; 25 Jul 1556 – 5 Jul 1557
- 3 & 5 Philip and Mary: 6 Jul 1557 – 24 Jul 1557
- 4 & 5 Philip and Mary; 25 Jul 1557 – 5 Jul 1558
- 4 & 6 Philip and Mary: 6 Jul 1558 – 24 Jul 1558

- 5 & 6 Philip and Mary: 25 Jul 1558 – 17 November 1558
  - h. By coincidence, James I's regnal years begin on the same date (25 March) as the English civil and legal year.
  - i. I. ^ The Commonwealth era (1649–1660) is obliterated from the official record. The beginning regnal date of Charles II is 30 January 1649, the day his father was executed. However, Charles II would *only* become *de facto* king on 29 May 1660, officially regarded as the 12th year of his reign. During the Commonwealth era, public documents did not have any regnal or republican calendar, just the conventional calendar date, the "Year of Our Lord", with normal month and day.
  - j. The English official record regards James II as having abdicated on 11 December 1688, the day he slipped out of London (he was captured the next day in Rochester). His formal deposition did not take instrument until 12 February 1689, by a declaration of the convention of old parliamentarians at Westminster (see "Glorious Revolution"), which backdated the "abdication" to 11 December. That declaration was entered into statute law later that year, in December 1689 (1 Will & Mar., 2nd Sess., c.2).
  - k. This is the exception to "England always has a King" rule, prevailing since the reign of Richard II. With James II officially deposed on 11 December 1688, and William & Mary officially beginning 13 February 1689, there is a space of nearly two months in which England, officially speaking, is without a monarch.
  - l. In regnal numbering, the relationship between "William and Mary" and "William III" is a little tricky. In the Philip and Mary I case, back in the 1550s, each monarch was given their own regnal date and stuck with it. William III and Mary II ascended as monarchs on the same date (13 February 1689), and so it was unnecessary to state it as "1 & 1 William and Mary", but simply "1 William and Mary". But Mary's death (on 27 December 1694, in the 6th year of W & M) complicated numbering. If the 1550s model had been used, then William III should have continued on his 6th year until 13 February 1695, when the new regnal year, the 7th year of William III, should have begun. However, in this instance, the regnal start day (but not the year) was reset after Mary's death, so William III's 7th year began prematurely on 28 December 1694.
  - m. George III was declared incapacitated on 5 February 1811, in the course of his 51st regnal year. However, the regnal dating was unaffected by the Regency, so regnal years were still measured by George III's regnal date of 25 October, until his death in 1820.
  - n. George IV's period as prince regent (1811–1820) for his ailing father, George III, is not counted in his regnal numbering.
1. Sweet & Maxwell's Guide 1962, p. 20.
  2. House of Commons 1802, pp. 59–61.
  3. Sweet & Maxwell's Guide 1962, pp. 21–33.
  4. Sweet & Maxwell's Guide 1962, p. 33.

## References

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- House of Commons (1802) [9 June 1660]. *Journal of the House of Commons: volume 8: 1660–1667* (<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.asp?compid=26211#s5>). pp. 59–61.

- "Chapter Five: Table of regnal year of English Sovereigns" ([https://guides.library.harvard.edu/ld.php?content\\_id=12548485](https://guides.library.harvard.edu/ld.php?content_id=12548485)). *Sweet & Maxwell's Guide to Law Reports and Statutes* (Fourth ed.). London: Sweet & Maxwell's Guide. 1962. pp. 20–33.

## Further reading

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- [Cheney, C. R.](#); [Jones, Michael](#), eds. (2000). *A Handbook of Dates for Students of British History*. Royal Historical Society Guides and Handbooks. Vol. 4 (Revised ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 21–47. ISBN 978-0-521-77095-8.
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