What is US daylight saving time and why was it created?

Daylight saving time is the practice of moving clocks forward by one hour during the summer months so daylight lasts longer into the evening. Most of North America and Europe follows the custom, while the majority of countries elsewhere, especially those close to the equator, do not.

The practice has been controversial from the outset, with many countries having adopted and rejected it multiple times. Egypt announced in March that it would reintroduce daylight saving time after a seven-year gap to rationalize energy use. Japan considered adopting the practice for the 2020 Olympics but rejected the proposal due to lack of popular support and technical challenges. Daylight saving time had been implemented in Taiwan after World War II.

The modern idea of changing the clocks with the seasons can be traced back to at least the late 19th century. The idea was slow to gain traction until World War I, when European states sought any strategies to conserve fuel. Germany was the first country to adopt daylight saving time in 1916 and the US followed in 1918.

The practice went through many variations before the US standardized it in 1966, which allows states to opt out of it but not to stay on daylight saving time permanently. A common myth is that the US adopted daylight saving time to benefit farmers, but in reality many farmers are opposed to the practice for being disruptive to their schedules. The original motivation of conserving fuel is also under debate, as studies have found little, if any, energy savings from the shift, according to the Congressional Research Service. Opponents point to other studies that have found adverse health effects linked to daylight saving time, such as a spike in fatal traffic accidents, heart attacks, strokes and sleep deprivation in the days after clocks are moved forward an hour every March.