

Lucky number 8

In every modern culture, there are numbers that are considered lucky and numbers that are considered unlucky.

In Western culture, the number seven is considered lucky, and the number 13 is unlucky. Friday the thirteenth is considered a very bad omen by some and people are often more careful on this day.

In Chinese culture the number four is an extremely bad omen, as the word for the number four sounds similar to the word for death. Many buildings in China do not include a fourth floor as a result.

However, the number 8 is considered very lucky by many Chinese because of its linguistic characteristics. The word "eight" sounds like "prosper" or "wealth" in Pinyin, a common romanization of Mandarin.

Eights all around

As a result of this interest in the number 8, many Chinese people look for it everywhere. They notice it in license plates, street numbers, telephone numbers and just about any place. If it happens to be present when they are in the middle of some venture, it is very auspicious.

Some Chinese are willing to pay large amounts of money for an eight or multiple eights to occur on their license plate or street number. In fact, the more 8's the better, and the more wealthy the owner of the car or house must be.

Important events are scheduled on months or days that contain an 8. The Beijing Olympic games are starting at 8/08/08PM on the eighth day of the eighth month of 2008. When the organizers of the Beijing games managed to arrange that date and time, they must have been very pleased.

Math SERIES



DAVIE WEES

Eight in mathematics

The number 8 has some interesting mathematical facts about it.

The number 8 is the smallest number with more than 2 factors that is also a perfect cube with two to the third power equals 8. It is also a Fibonacci number, which are numbers in the series 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, etc. These numbers are special in nature because they show up in growth patterns of many plants and animals.

The modern day symbol for infinity looks very much like an 8 on its side. The precise origin of it is not known, but one theory is that it was chosen because it was easy to rotate an 8 in the original hand type-setters. Another theory suggests that it was chosen because of its similarity to the ancient symbol of two snakes eating each other's tails, which represents the everlasting circle of life.

The number 8 is also the base of our data representation in our computing system. In a byte there are 8 bits, the most basic unit of measurement of computational data.

Quite often the octal numbering system, based on the number 8, is used in calculations on a computer because of its efficiency in computations.

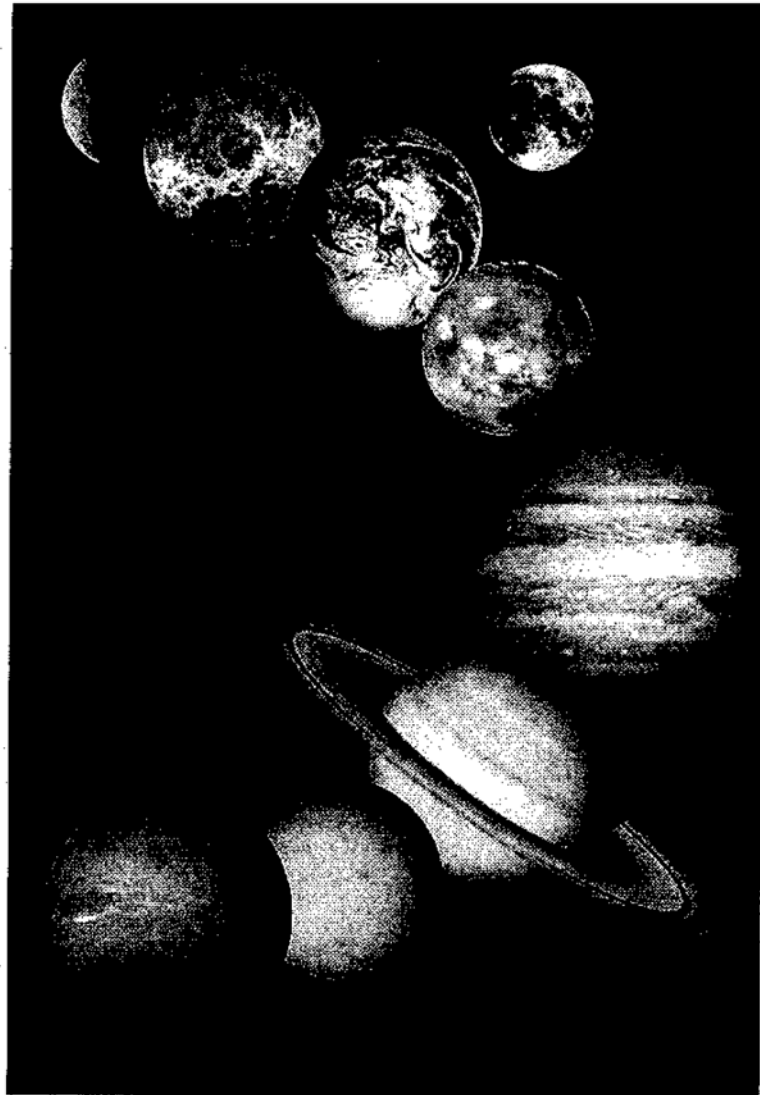
In this system of numbering, we count in powers of 8. One through 7 are the same in both decimal and octal, but 8 becomes written as 10. Eleven through 17 in octal are equivalent to 9 through 15 in our regular decimal notation, and 16 in decimal is written as 20 and so on.

In binary number 8 is written as 1,000, and $8 \times 8 = 64$ which is 1,000,000 in binary. This system is based on powers of 2. Next time you look at your paycheck, write it out in binary, you'll feel a lot better.

What harm?

There is no harm in associating special luck with a number. Although many Chinese spend the equivalent of thousands of US dollars on license plates that contain the number 8, the increased confidence these license plates bring probably makes them worthwhile.

There is danger when people begin to obsess about numbers, as is shown in the



And now there are eight. Today our solar system has only eight planets. From the top, they are: Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune. Pluto is now classified as a dwarf planet, a newly created class of planets. AFP

recent movie, *The Number 23*. Planning your entire life around avoiding a particular number or including a special number in every aspect of your life can be dangerous. Everything should be in moderation. Having respect for the supernatural and a belief in luck is normal, but letting this belief control your life should be avoided. As an exercise for yourself, research the octal and binary base number systems and write out your age in those systems. Note that your answer will not contain any 8's.

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