

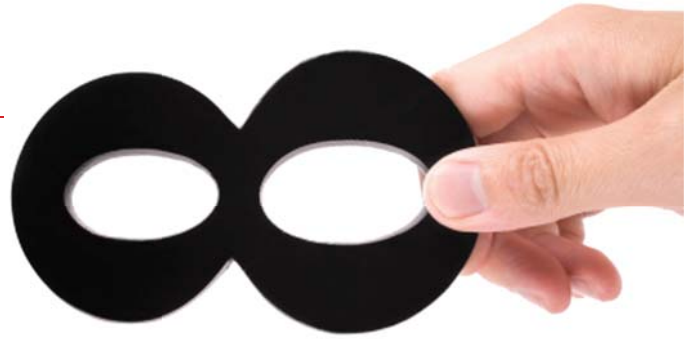


# Lucky Number 8

## Why is 8 a lucky number?

by David Wees

*In every modern culture on our world, there are numbers that are considered lucky and numbers that are considered unlucky*



In Western culture, the number 7 is considered lucky, and the number 13 is unlucky.

Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>, when it happens, is considered a very bad omen by some and people are often more careful on this day.

In Chinese culture the number 4 is an extremely bad omen, as the word for the number 4 sounds similar to the word for death. Many buildings in China do not include a 4<sup>th</sup> floor as a result.

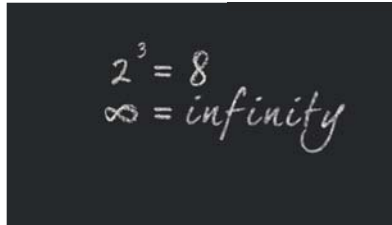
However the number 8 is considered very lucky, again because of linguistic characteristics. The word for 8 sounds like prosper or wealth in Pinyin, a common romanization of Mandarin.

### 8's 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 all over the place. If it happens to be present when they are in the middle of some venture, it is very auspicious.

Some Chinese people are willing to pay large amount of money for an 8 or multiple 8's to occur in 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 started at 8:08:08 pm on the 8<sup>th</sup> day of the 8<sup>th</sup> month of 2008. When the organizers of the Beijing games managed to arrange that date, they must have been very pleased.



### 8 in Mathematics

The number 8 has some interesting mathematical facts about it.

8 is the smallest number with more than 2 factors which is also a perfect cube with  $2^3 = 8$ . It is also a Fibonacci number, which are numbers in the series 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, etc... These numbers are special in nature because they show up in growth patterns of many different plants.

The modern day symbol for infinity,  $\infty$ , looks very much like an 8 on its side. The precise origin of  $\infty$  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 2 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. So 1 through 7 are the same in both decimal and octal, but 8 becomes

written as 10. 11 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 the number 8 is written as 1000, and  $8 \times 8 = 64$  which is 1000000 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 the belief of special luck associated with a number. Although many Chinese people spend the equivalent of thousand of US dollars on license plates with the number 8 in them, 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 recent movie 23. Planning your entire life around avoiding a particular number or in including a special number in every aspect of your life is 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.

