

Lucky Numbers (Elementary)

Have you ever heard of a homophone? Homophones are words that sound alike but have different meanings. List some homophones that you know:

Pair and Pear (for example)

In the Chinese languages of Mandarin and Cantonese, there are many homophones. In Chinese culture, certain numbers are considered lucky because the word for the number sounds like another word. If that word has a good meaning, then the number is lucky. If that word does not have a good meaning, then the number is considered unlucky.

Chinese Auspicious and Inauspicious Numbers				
Number	Character	Mandarin pronunciation	Homophones	Meaning
4	四	si	四 si	die, be dead
5	五	wu	無 wu	not having, without
6	六	liu	溜 liu	slide, smooth
7	七	qi (chee)	起 qi	beginning; together
8	八	ba	發 fa	prosper, become rich
9	九	jiu	久 jiu	long lasting

Which numbers do you think are considered lucky? What makes you think that?

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This *chaofu*, or court robe, was worn by an important male court official during the Qing dynasty. It was part of his regalia, or special clothing for a formal occasion, and the emperor gave him permission to wear this particular color and design.

What do you see that confirms this is a special piece of clothing?

How is this outfit similar or different to clothing you wear for special occasions?

Dragons were thought to be very powerful because they were a combination of many different animals.

How many dragons do you see? _____

Nine is a divine, or holy, number in Chinese tradition. Dragons are said to have the features of nine different animals: the horns of a deer, the head of a camel, the eyes of a demon, the neck of a snake, the belly of a clam, the scales of a fish, the claws of hawk, the paws of a tiger, and the ears of a cow.

Was your count of dragons a multiple of 9? If so, that means this robe was very special because 9 was a number connected to the emperor.

What else can you count on the robe? Is there anything that appears a lucky number of times?

Lucky Numbers (Middle School/Junior High)

The number 8 is considered a very lucky number. The mandarin word for 8 is *ba*, which is a homophone for “fortune” or “wealth.” A company in Hong Kong paid over two million dollars for a phone number that was made up entirely of 8s. Now that’s a “rich” number! Can you solve these crazy 8s puzzles?

1. Use 8 exactly eight times in an equation that equals 1,000.

First, try it using only the 4 main operations: $+$ $-$ \times \div

Now, try it allowing square roots $\sqrt{}$, exponents $^$, factorials $!$, and decimal points.

2. Four is considered the unluckiest number. That is because the word *si* is a homophone for “death.” In some hotels in China, there are no floors with a number 4. That means the elevator might go from floor 13 to floor 15 because there is no floor 14!

Can you turn this unlucky number into a more auspicious one? Try turning four 4s into a 6, 7, 8, or 9!

Use exactly four 4s to form the integers 6, 7, 8, or 9. You can use:

- operators $+$ $-$ \times \div
- $()$ (brackets)
- $.$ (decimal point)
- x^2 (square)
- $\sqrt{}$ (square root)
- $!$ (factorial)

Example: $4! - 4 \times 4 - 4 = 8$

3. Using number tiles or pieces of paper labeled 1–8, place the digits 1–8 in the rectangles below so that no two consecutive numbers are next to each other horizontally, vertically, or diagonally. For example, if the 5 is placed in the far-left box, then the 4 or 6 can’t be placed in the box directly to the right of the 5 or the two boxes that are diagonally above and below the 5.



