



Friday the 13th



Be careful! June 13th is a Friday and many people believe that Friday the 13th is a day when bad things happen.

A HORRIBLE DAY

Up to 20 million Americans are afraid of Friday the 13th because they think it's unlucky. Some of them are so scared that they spend the day in bed. Others won't drive a car or travel on a plane because they think they could have an accident. There's even a series of American horror films called Friday the 13th, about very bad things that happen at a summer camp.

THE LAST SUPPER

The fear of Friday the 13th comes from a belief that Friday is an unlucky day and that 13 is an unlucky number. Some Christians believe that 13 is unfortunate because there were 13 people at the Last Supper and one of them, Judas Iscariot, betrayed Jesus Christ. They also believe that Jesus died on a Friday. However, the idea that Friday the 13th is unlucky became popular only in the last century.

PHOBIAS

The fear of the number 13 is evident in the western world. Some hotels with more than 12 floors skip the number 13 – so their 13th floor is called the 14th floor – and airlines skip the 13th row on their airplanes. They say it's not because they believe that 13 is unlucky but because their customers won't stay on a floor or sit in a row that's labelled 13. There's even a word for the fear of 13, "triskaidekaphobia," and for the fear of Friday the 13th, "friggatriskaidekaphobia."

THE BLACK CAT

People in the English-speaking world are superstitious about a lot more than one day and number. Many of them think, for example, that you'll have bad luck if a black cat crosses your path. This probably comes from the medieval belief that some women were witches and cats were their "familiars" – supernatural animals that helped them to do bad things.

KNOCK ON WOOD

You must knock on wood 3 times after mentioning good fortune or the evil spirits will ruin things for you. If you knock your hand accidentally against a piece of wood or a wooden article, it is an indication that you are about to have a love affair. It was believed that good spirits lived in trees, and that by knocking on anything made from wood, we could call upon these spirits for protection against misfortune.

OTHER SUPERSTITIONS

LADDER

Walking under a ladder: Triangles **represent** the Holy Trinity, and **violating** the Trinity by breaking it (walking through it) would put you in league with the **devil** himself. Walking under a ladder, unless you cross their fingers while doing so.

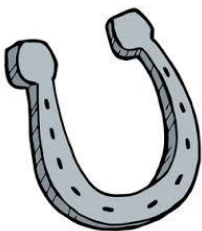


SALT

Salt used to be an expensive **commodity** used mainly for **medicinal** purposes. For this reason, spillage was to be avoided at all costs. The idea that it is unlucky to do so probably stems from the belief that Judas spilt salt during the last supper.

UMBRELLA

Bad Luck: Opening an umbrella indoors. **Dropping** an umbrella on the floor means that there will be a **murder** in the house.



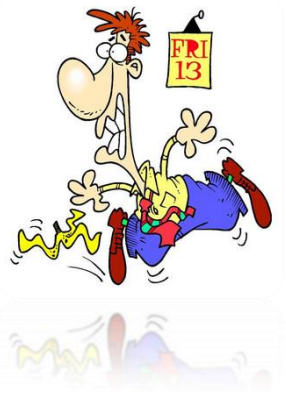
HORSESHOE

Finding a horseshoe is an **assurance** of good luck, but if you give it away or throw it away, your luck will leave you. A horseshoe hung in the bedroom will keep **nightmares** away. The horseshoe must be hung with the points up to keep the luck from **spilling out**.

MIRROR

Breaking a mirror means 7 years of bad luck, unless you take the pieces outside and **bury** them in **moonlight**. Also, if a mirror in a house suddenly fall and **smashes** then it means that there will soon be a death. Breaking a mirror brings seven years of bad luck. It is also extremely unlucky to receive a





EXERCISE 1.

Read the article and answer the questions.

1. What do some people in the USA do on Friday 13th because of their fears?
2. Why do some Christians think both 13 and Friday are unlucky?
3. Why do hotels and airlines feel obliged not to use the number 13?
4. What did some people think about cats in the Middle Ages?
5. What's the purpose of saying "knock on wood"?

EXERCISE 2.

Read these incomplete statements and try to complete them.

1. In the USA, up to _____ people believe that Friday the 13th is unlucky.
2. Friday the 13th is even the name of a series of American _____.
3. The idea that Friday the 13th is unlucky started only in _____.
4. In _____ the rows go from 12 to 14, skipping row 13.
5. Some people also believe they'll have bad luck if _____ crosses their path.

EXERCISE 3.

Find the appropriate words to these definitions from the text in bold („Other Superstitions” part).

1. a product that is bought and sold
2. to officially speak or take action for another person or group of people
3. to stop holding or carrying something so that it falls
4. to flow or fall out of a container
5. to cause something to break noisily into a lot of small pieces
6. the pale light of the moon
7. to disobey or do something against an official agreement, law, principle etc.
8. an evil spirit
9. to put someone who has died in a grave
10. a very frightening dream
11. the crime of deliberately killing someone
12. a promise that something will definitely happen or is definitely true
13. used for treating medical problems

