

# **SUPERSTITIONS & OLD WIVES TALES**

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**ACORN** An acorn should be carried to bring luck and ensure a long life.  
An acorn at the window will keep lightning out

**AMBER** Amber beads, worn as a necklace, can protect against illness or cure colds.

**AMBULANCE** Seeing an ambulance is very unlucky unless you pinch your nose or hold your breath until you see a black or a brown dog.

Touch your toes

Touch your nose

Never go in one of those

Until you see a dog.

**APPLE** Think of five or six names of boys or girls you might marry, As you twist the stem of an apple, recite the names until the stem comes off. You will marry the person whose name you were saying when the stem fell off.

An apple a day

Keeps the doctor away.

If you cut an apple in half and count how many seeds are inside, you will also know how many children you will have.

**BABY** To predict the sex of a baby: Suspend a wedding band held by a piece of thread over the palm of the pregnant girl. If the ring swings in an oval or circular motion the baby will be a girl. If the ring swings in a straight line the baby will be a boy.

**BASEBALL BAT** Spit on a new bat before using it for the first time to make it lucky

**BED** It's bad luck to put a hat on a bed.

If you make a bedspread, or a quilt, be sure to finish it or marriage will never come to you

Placing a bed facing north and south brings misfortune.

You must get out of bed on the same side that you get in or you will have bad luck.

When making the bed, don't interrupt your work, or you will spend a restless night in it.

**BEE** If a bee enters your home, it's a sign that you will soon have a visitor. If you kill the bee, you will have bad luck, or the visitor will be unpleasant.

A swarm of bees settling on a roof is an omen that the house will burn down.

**BELL** The sound of bells drives away demons because they're afraid of the loud noise.

When a bell rings, a new angel has received his wings.

**BIRD** A bird in the house is a sign of a death.

If a robin flies into a room through a window, death will shortly follow.

**BIRTH** Monday's child is fair of face;  
 Tuesday's child is full of grace;  
 Wednesday's child is full of woe;  
 Thursday's child has far to go;  
 Friday's child is loving and giving;  
 Saturday's child works hard for a living.  
 But the child that is born on the Sabbath day  
 is fair and wise, good and gay.

**BIRTHDAY CAKE** If you blow out all the candles on your birthday cake with the first puff you will get your wish.

**BLARNEY STONE** The Blarney Stone is a stone set in the wall of the Blarney Castle tower in the Irish village of Blarney. Kissing the stone is supposed to bring the kisser the gift of persuasive eloquence (blarney.)

**BLUE** To protect yourself from witches, wear a blue bead.

Touch blue  
 And your wish  
 Will come true.

**BREAD** Before slicing a new loaf of bread, make the sign of the cross on it.  
 A loaf of bread should never be turned upside down after a slice has been cut from it.

**BRIDGE** If you say good-bye to a friend on a bridge, you will never see each other again.

**BROOM** Do not lean a broom against a bed. The evil spirits in the broom will cast a spell on the bed.

If you sweep trash out the door after dark, it will bring a stranger to visit.

If someone is sweeping the floor and sweeps over your feet, you'll never get married.

Never take a broom along when you move. Throw it out and buy a new one.

To prevent an unwelcome guest from returning, sweep out the room they stayed in immediately after they leave.

**BUTTERFLY** If the first butterfly you see in the year is white, you will have good luck all year.

Three butterflies together mean good luck.

- CANDLE** If a candle lighted as part of a ceremony blows out, it is a sign that evil spirits are nearby.
- CALF** If the first calf born during the winter is white, the winter will be a bad one.
- CAT** If a black cat walks towards you, it brings good fortune, but if it walks away, it takes the good luck with it.  
Keep cats away from babies because they "suck the breath" of the child.  
A cat onboard a ship is considered to bring luck.
- CHEEKS** If your cheeks suddenly feel on fire, someone is talking about you.
- CHILL** If you get a chill up your back or goosebumps, it means that someone is walking over your grave.
- CHIMNEY SWEEP** It's very lucky to meet a chimney sweep by chance. Make a wish when sighting one, and the wish will come true.
- CIGARETTES** It is bad luck to light three cigarettes with the same match.
- CIRCLE** Evil spirits can't harm you when you stand inside a circle.
- CLOCK** If a clock which has not been working suddenly chimes, there will be a death in the family.
- CLOVER** It's good luck to find a four-leaf clover.  
Clover protects human beings and animals from the spell of magicians and the wiles of fairies, and brings good luck to those who keep it in the house.
- COIN** It's bad luck to pick up a coin if it's tails side up. Good luck comes if it's heads up.
- COMB** To drop a comb while you are combing your hair is a sign of a coming disappointment.
- COUGH** To cure a cough: take a hair from the coughing person's head, put it between two slices of buttered bread, feed it to a dog, and say, "Eat well you hound, may you be sick and I be sound."
- COW** Cows lifting their tails is a sure sign that rain is coming.
- CRACK** Don't step on a crack on a sidewalk or walkway.  
Step on a crack  
Break your mother's back.
- CRICKET** A cricket in the house brings good luck.
- COUNTING** One's bad,  
**CROWS** Two's luck,  
Three's health,

Four's wealth,  
Five's sickness,  
Six is death.

**DANDELION** Pick a dandelion that has gone to seed. Take a deep breath and blow the seeds into the wind. Count the seeds that remain on the stem. That is the number of children you will have.

**DOG** A dog howling at night when someone in the house is sick is a bad omen.

**DOOR** It's bad luck to leave a house through a different door than the one used to come into it.

**EARS** If your right ear itches, someone is speaking well of you.  
If your left ear itches, someone is speaking ill of you.

Left for love and right for spite:  
Left or right, good at night.

**EASTER** For good luck throughout the year, wear new clothes on Easter.

**ELEPHANT** Pictures of an elephant bring luck, but only if they face a door.

**EYE** If your right eye twitches there will soon be a birth in the family. If the left eye twitches there will soon be a death in the family.

To cure a sty, stand at a crossroads and recite  
Sty, sty, leave my eye  
Take the next one coming by.

**EYELASH** If an eyelash falls out, put it on the back of the hand, make a wish and throw it over your shoulder. If it flies off the hand the wish will be granted.

**FINGERNAILS** It is bad luck to cut your fingernails on Friday or Sunday.  
Fingernail cuttings should be saved, burned, or buried.

**FISH** A fish should always be eaten from the head toward the tail.  
Dream of fish: someone you know is pregnant.

**FISHING** Throw back the first fish you catch then you'll be lucky the whole day fishing.

If you count the number of fish you caught, you will catch no more that day.

It's bad luck to say the word "pig" while fishing at sea.

**FLAG** It brings bad luck for a flag to touch the ground.

**FLOWER** First Flower of Spring: The day you find the first flower of the season can be used as an omen:  
Monday means good fortune,

Tuesday means greatest attempts will be successful,  
 Wednesday means marriage,  
 Thursday means warning of small profits,  
 Friday means wealth,  
 Saturday means misfortune,  
 Sunday means excellent luck for weeks.

**FOOT** If the bottom of your right foot itches, you are going to take a trip.

**FORK** To drop a fork means a man is coming to visit.

**FRIDAY** A bed changed on Friday will bring bad dreams.

Any ship that sails on Friday will have bad luck.

You should never start a trip on Friday or you will meet misfortune.

Never start to make a garment on Friday unless you can finish it the same day.

### **FRIDAY THE 13TH - how did Friday the thirteenth become such an unlucky day?**

fear of Friday the 13th is rooted in ancient, separate bad-luck associations with the number 13 and the day Friday. The two unlucky entities combine to make one super unlucky day.

There is a Norse myth about 12 gods having a dinner party at Valhalla, their heaven. In walked the uninvited 13th guest, the mischievous Loki. Once there, Loki arranged for Hoder, the blind god of darkness, to shoot Balder the Beautiful, the god of joy and gladness, with a mistletoe-tipped arrow. Balder died and the Earth got dark. The whole Earth mourned.

There is a Biblical reference to the unlucky number 13. Judas, the apostle who betrayed Jesus, was the 13th guest to the Last Supper.

A particularly bad Friday the 13th occurred in the middle ages. On a Friday the 13th in 1306, King Philip of France arrested the revered Knights Templar and began torturing them, marking the occasion as a day of evil.

In ancient Rome, witches reportedly gathered in groups of 12. The 13th was believed to be the devil.

Both Friday and the number 13 were once closely associated with capital punishment. In British tradition, Friday was the conventional day for public hangings, and there were supposedly 13 steps leading up to the noose.

It is traditionally believed that Eve tempted Adam with the apple on a Friday. Tradition also has it that the Flood in the Bible, the confusion at the Tower of Babel, and the death of Jesus Christ all took place on Friday.

Numerologists consider 12 a "complete" number. There are 12 months in a year, 12 signs of the zodiac, 12 gods of Olympus, 12 labors of Hercules, 12 tribes of Israel, and 12 apostles of Jesus. In exceeding 12 by 1, 13's association with bad luck has to do with just being a little beyond completeness.

### **FRIDAY THE 13TH - how is fear of the number thirteen demonstrated?**

More than 80 percent of high-rises lack a 13th floor.

Many airports skip the 13th gate.

Airplanes have no 13th aisle.

Hospitals and hotels regularly have no room number 13.

Italians omit the number 13 from their national lottery.

On streets in Florence, Italy, the house between number 12 and 14 is addressed as 12 and a half.

Many cities do not have a 13th Street or a 13th Avenue

In France, socialites known as the quatorziens (fourteeners) once made themselves available as 14th guests to keep a dinner party from an unlucky fate.

Many triskaidekaphobes, as those who fear the unlucky integer are known, point to the ill-fated mission to the moon, Apollo 13.

If you have 13 letters in your name, you will have the devil's luck . Jack the Ripper, Charles Manson, Jeffrey Dahmer, Theodore Bundy and Albert De Salvo all have 13 letters in their names.

**FROG** A frog brings good luck to the house it enters.

The dried body of a frog worn in a silk bag around the neck averts epilepsy and other fits.

**GOOD FRIDAY** A child born on Good Friday and baptized on Easter Sunday has a gift of healing. If a boy, he should go into the ministry.  
**(The Friday before Easter)**

Cut your hair on Good Friday to prevent headaches in the year to come

A person who dies on Good Friday will go right to heaven.

Shed no blood on Good Friday, work no wood, hammer no nail.

**HAIR** Pulling out a gray or white hair will cause ten more to grow in its place.

**HAND** If the palm of your right hand itches it means you will soon be getting money.

If the palm of your left hand itches it means you will soon be paying

out money.

**HORSESHOE** A horseshoe, hung above the doorway, will bring good luck to a home. In most of Europe protective horseshoes are placed in a downward facing position, but in some parts of Ireland and Britain people believe that the shoes must be turned upward or "the luck will run out."

A horseshoe hung in the bedroom will keep nightmares away.

**ITCH** If your nose itches you will soon be kissed by a fool.

If your nose itches  
Your mouth is in danger.  
You'll kiss a fool,  
And meet a stranger.  
Rub an itch to wood  
It will come to good.

**IVY** Ivy growing on a house protects the inhabitants from witchcraft and evil.

**KNIFE** A knife as a gift from a lover means that the love will soon end.

A knife placed under the bed during childbirth will ease the pain of labor.

If a friend gives you a knife, you should give him a coin, or your friendship will soon be broken.

It will cause a quarrel if knives are crossed at the table.

It is bad luck to close a pocket knife unless you were the one who opened it.

Knife falls, gentleman calls;  
Fork falls, lady calls;  
Spoon falls, baby calls.

**KNITTING** It's bad luck to leave a project unfinished. The intended recipient will get bad luck from the unfinished item.

Stabbing your needles through your yarn balls brings bad luck to anyone who wears something made from that yarn.

Don't knit a pair of socks for your boyfriend or he'll walk away from you.

If you knit one of your own hairs into a garment, it will bind the recipient to you.

Knitting for children you may have in the future, but before you are pregnant, is bad luck (it may prevent one from getting pregnant, or bring ill health to the baby).

**LADDER** It is bad luck to walk under a ladder.



- LADYBUG** If a young girl catches a ladybug and then releases it, the direction in which it flies away will be the direction from which her future husband will come.
- It is bad luck to kill a ladybug.
- Ladybug, ladybug, fly away home.  
Your house is on fire,  
Your children all roam.
- LEAF** If you catch a falling leaf on the first day of autumn you will not catch a cold all winter.
- LETTUCE** Lettuce is believed to have magical and healing properties, including the power to arouse love and counteract the effects of wine.
- Lettuce promotes child bearing if eaten by young women, and certain types of salad can bring on labor in pregnant women.
- LIE** Cross my heart and hope to die,  
Cut my throat if I tell a lie.
- LIZARD** To dream of a lizard is a sign that you have a secret enemy.
- MANDRAKE** Mandrake is a mysterious plant believed to have powers of preventing sterility in men and animals, causing barren women to bear children, and compelling love.
- Mandrake is thought to have aphrodisiac and fertilizing properties.
- Clairvoyants use mandrake to increase their visions to enable them to see strange and wonderful things.
- MILK** It's bad luck to let milk boil over.
- MIRROR** To break a mirror means 7 years bad luck.
- It is unlucky to see your face in a mirror by candlelight.
- A mirror should be covered during a thunderstorm because it attracts lightning.
- If a mirror in the house falls and breaks by itself, someone in the house will die soon.
- MISTLETOE** Mistletoe in the house protects it from thunder and lightning. It also cures many diseases, is an antidote to poison and brings good luck and fertility.
- A girl standing under a mistletoe cannot refuse to be kissed by anyone who claims the privilege.
- MOTH** A white moth inside the house or trying to enter the house means death.
- NOSE** If your nose itches, someone is coming to see you. If it's the right nostril, the visitor will be a female, left nostril, male.

- ONION** An onion cut in half and placed under the bed of a sick person will draw off fever and poisons.  
A wish will come true if you make it while burning onions.
- OPAL** Unless you were born in October, it's unlucky to wear opals.
- OWL** It is bad luck to see an owl in the sunlight.
- PENCIL** If you use the same pencil to take a test that you used for studying for the test, the pencil will remember the answers.
- PEPPER** If you spill pepper you will have a serious argument with your best friend.
- PHOTOGRAPH** If 3 people are photographed together, the one in the middle will die first.
- RABBIT'S FOOT** A rabbit's foot will bring luck and protect the owner from evil spirits if carried in the pocket.
- RAINBOW** A rainbow in the Eastern sky,  
The morrow will be fine and dry.  
A rainbow in the West that gleams,  
Rain tomorrow falls in streams.
- RAVEN** To kill a raven is to harm the spirit of King Arthur who visits the world in the form of a raven.
- RED** A red ribbon should be placed on a child who has been sick to keep the illness from returning.
- ROBIN** A wish made upon seeing the first robin in spring will come true - but only if you complete the wish before the robin flies away.
- ROCKING CHAIR** If you leave a rocking chair rocking when empty, it invites evil spirits to come into your house to sit in the rocking chair.
- ROSEMARY** Rosemary planted by the doorstep will keep witches away.
- SALT** Bad luck will follow the spilling of salt unless a pinch is thrown over the left shoulder into the face of the devil waiting there.  
Put salt on the doorstep of a new house and no evil can enter.  
Salty soup is a sign that the cook is in love.
- SCISSORS** If you drop scissors, it means your lover is being unfaithful to you.
- SEA GULL** Three seagulls flying together, directly overhead, are a warning of death soon to come.
- SHOES** Do not place shoes upon a table, for this will bring bad luck for the day, cause trouble with your mate and you might even lose your job as a result.  
It's bad luck to leave shoes upside down.

**SINGING** If you sing before seven, you will cry before eleven.

**SLEEP** You sleep best with your head to the north and your feet to the south.

**SNEEZE** Place a hand in front of your mouth when sneezing. Your soul may escape otherwise.

The devil can enter your body when you sneeze. Having someone say, "God bless you," drives the devil away.

If you sneeze on a Monday, you sneeze for danger;  
Sneeze on a Tuesday, kiss a stranger;  
Sneeze on a Wednesday, sneeze for a letter;  
Sneeze on a Thursday, something better;  
Sneeze on a Friday, sneeze for sorrow;  
Sneeze on a Saturday, see your sweetheart tomorrow.  
Sneeze on a Sunday, and the devil will have domination over you all week.

One for sorrow  
Two for joy  
Three for a letter  
Four for a boy.  
Five for silver  
Six for gold  
Seven for a secret, never to be told

**SPARROW** Sparrows carry the souls of the dead; it's unlucky to kill one.

**SPIDER** Seeing a spider run down a web in the afternoon means you'll take a trip.

A spider is a repellent against plague when worn around the neck in a walnut shell.

**STARS** All wishes on shooting stars come true.

Star light, star bright  
First star I see tonight,  
I wish I may, I wish I might  
Have the wish I wish tonight.

**SWAN** A swan's feather, sewed into the husband's pillow, will ensure fidelity.

**THIRTEEN** If 13 people sit down at a table to eat, one of them will die before the year is over.

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**TONGUE** If you bite your tongue while eating, it is because you have recently told a lie.

**UMBRELLA** Dropping an umbrella on the floor means that there will be a murder in the house.

It's bad luck to open an umbrella inside the house, especially if you put it over your head.

**VALENTINE'S DAY** If a woman sees a robin flying overhead on Valentine's Day, it means she will marry a sailor. If she sees a sparrow, she will marry a poor man and be very happy. If she sees a goldfinch, she will marry a millionaire.

**VEIL** A bride's veil protects her from evil spirits who are jealous of happy people.

**WATERMELON** A watermelon will grow in your stomach if you swallow a watermelon seed.

**WEATHER** Red sky at night,  
Sailor's delight.  
Red sky at morning  
Sailors take warning

Rain, rain, go away,  
Come again another day.  
Rain on the green grass  
Rain on the hillside,  
But not on me.

**WOOD** Knock three times on wood after mentioning good fortune so evil spirits won't ruin it.

**WINDOW** All windows should be opened at the moment of death so that the soul can leave.

**WISH** If you make a wish while throwing a coin into a well or fountain, the wish will come true.

Wish I may,  
Wish I might  
Have the wish I wish tonight.

If you tell someone your wish, it won't come true.

**WISHBONE** Two people pull apart the dried breastbone of a chicken or turkey until it cracks and breaks, each one making a wish while doing so. The person who gets the long half of the wishbone will have his or her wish come true.

**X** The number of Xs in the palm of your right hand is the number of children you will have.

**YAWN** A yawn is a sign that danger is near.

Cover your mouth when you yawn, or your soul can go out of your body along with the yawn.