



# Talking Points

# Numbers

# and Luck

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## **Introduction**

Do you think some numbers have good luck?

Do some numbers have bad luck?

What numbers are lucky in your culture?

What numbers are bad luck in your culture?

## My Lucky Number

*Read Phil's story below...*

I have always used the same numbers for the lottery.

Same numbers every time week in, week out.

My numbers are 23 — 02 — 13.

Why do I have these numbers?

*I can explain...*

My mum was born on the 23rd of October. So I chose 23 because of that. Two is because of my two kids. So I think that is a very important number for me. And thirteen because most people think thirteen is unlucky, so they avoid it like the plague.

And that is my very reason for choosing it.

You can't just say a number is bad or bad luck just because of some religious belief about the number. That's just silly.

So I have it tagged on the end.

Now, the idea with numbers is that you have to stick with them. I have been playing the lottery for almost fifteen years now and I have never once changed my numbers.

You find the numbers that you think work for you. Like for me,

my mum's birthday and my two kids, and then you stay with those numbers all the time.

***That's when they work for you.***

It's not really luck, it just comes down to mathematics.

Now take my friend Stan.

He had his own numbers, and he stuck with them. But he'd been doing the lottery for about ten years or so and he hadn't won anything.

So he said to me: *I'm going to change my numbers. These numbers I'm using are bad luck.*

I laughed at him and told him not to be so stupid, but he wouldn't listen to me.

He changed his numbers and then the following week, his old numbers came up.

He saw them flash up on the TV and he was kicking himself.

That's when I knew my theory was right. You find six numbers that are your lucky numbers and you never change them.

Stan doesn't really talk to me anymore, so I don't know if he is still using his old numbers or not.

One of the last things he said to me was that I have never won anything on the lottery.

***And that is true.***

But that's how the maths works. That's the theory of numbers.

You have to stick with the same numbers and then eventually they will come up and you can win big.

My wife has the right idea. She also sticks with the same numbers.

She's been using her lucky numbers almost as long as I've been using mine — about twelve years. And she has not changed her numbers once.

And yes, so far, our numbers have not appeared on the lottery. Yet.

But you know, if I change my numbers, that is the time when the numbers will come up.

It's consistency and understanding of how mathematics and probability work.

Like the old saying, a stopped clock can still be one hundred per cent right twice a day. And that's how I think with my lucky numbers.

***They are like a stopped clock.***

## Reading Comprehension Questions

Who is the person in this story?

What is he talking about?

What are his lucky numbers?

What reasons does he give for choosing these numbers?

What is Phil's main rule about numbers and the lottery?

How long has he been playing the lottery?

Has he used the same numbers all that time?

Does Phil think his rule about playing the lottery comes down to chance?

Who is Phil's friend? Does he play the lottery?

How long had Phil's friend been playing the lottery?

Did he win anything in all this time?

Why did Phil's friend want to change his number?

What happened the following week?

Are Phil and Stan still friends?

Has Phil ever won the lottery?

Does Phil's wife play the lottery?

If so, how long has she played?

What does Phil say about clocks?

## Essential Vocabulary

lottery	week in, week out	avoid it like the plague
religious	belief	silly
tagged	mathematics	to flash up
theory	consistency	probability
one hundred per cent		

### Exercise

Write down all the words and phrases in your vocabulary notebook. Look in your dictionary and find the meaning of each word. Write the definition next to each word.

Then make up your own sentences using each word or phrase.

For example:

**Notebook**—*a small book with pages of blank paper that students use to make notes when studying.*

***“I left my notebook at home so I was unable to make any notes in my English class.”***



## Discussion Questions

What do you think of this story?

What do you think of Phil?

Is his method of trying to win the lottery any good?

What is good about it?

What is not good about it?

Why does Phil choose his mother's date of birth as one of his lucky numbers?

Why does he choose the number of children he has as a lucky number?

And why does he choose the number thirteen?

What does Phil mean about the number thirteen and religious belief? (If you don't know, try to find out...)

Phil has been playing the lottery for fifteen years. Does he have any chance of winning?

Why do you think Phil and Stan no longer speak to each other?

What does Phil mean by a stopped clock can still be right twice a day?

Is this theory correct?

Do you believe in luck?

Do you play the lottery in your country?

Do you have any personal lucky numbers? What are they? Why are they lucky for you?

Which numbers in your country/culture are good luck?

Which numbers are bad luck?

Do you think the lottery should be allowed?

Is it fair to let people buy lottery tickets every week?

Where does the money go from lottery tickets?

Does it go to a good cause?

If you were in charge of the lottery, what would you do with the money?

Would you give it to the needy? (Homeless people, orphans, poor people)

Or would you keep it for yourself?

Explain your reasons.

## Role Play

**This is a role play activity.**

The two characters are:

**Phil** — the man in the story

**John** — another friend of Phil

### **The Situation**

Phil and John are good friends and they meet for coffee one day.

Phil brings up the lottery and his theory about what numbers to use.

John has never played the lottery. He thinks it is a waste of time and money.

But he listens to Phil talking about his ideas about lucky numbers, mathematics and probability.

Finally, he can take no more and he tells Phil that playing the lottery is for fools.

The chance of Phil winning the lottery is one in a million. Maybe much more than that.

Phil listens, but is not convinced at all. He thinks his friend John is kind of foolish.

He argues with John and tries to point out his very clear ideas on how to win the lottery.

The two friends keep arguing.

What will the outcome be?

In pairs, spend some time working on your role play.

***Then, when you are ready, show the class!***

## **Debate**

**This is a debate activity.**

There are two teams in this debate.

### **Team A**

You are all against the lottery. You believe that it is nothing more than gambling and it should not be allowed in the city. You want the sale of lottery tickets in the city to be banned.

### **Team B**

You think playing the lottery is just a little bit of fun. It is harmless and it should be allowed.

It is not a lot of money to buy a lottery ticket and we should not control how people spend their money.

### **The Situation**

Every news agent, every news kiosk, and every convenience store sells lottery tickets in the city.

It seems like everyone plays the lottery every weekend.

But is this a good idea? Is it good for people to do things like this?

Some people believe that the lottery is turning people into slaves. They are becoming addicted to the idea that they could win millions and retire.

And young people, as soon as they start working, start buying lottery tickets.

This cannot be good for society. It cannot be good for the morale of the city.

Should we stop the lottery altogether?

Divide the class into two teams — Team A and Team B.

Choose one person to act as a chairperson. The chairperson will ensure that everyone has a chance to speak in the debate and that there is order throughout.

Get into your teams. Take some time to prepare your lines of argument, and what you want to say in the debate.

***When you are ready, begin the debate!***

## Writing

**This is a writing exercise.**

You are going to write a short story. It can be any length you wish, but it must be a story that the reader can understand.

The title of the story is...

### Three

Your story is about the number three — and how it is very bad luck for the main character in your story.

Usually, the number three is good luck around the world. Many countries believe the number three to have good fortune.

But in your story, the number three is very unlucky.

It brings terrible misfortune to anyone who has this number as part of their life.

**Write your story.**

When you have finished, you can read your story out loud in front of your classmates and teacher.

Or you can submit it to your teacher for feedback.

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