

READING COMPREHENSION

- a Do you do any of these things when you want to have good luck or avoid bad luck?



cross your fingers



touch wood



wear lucky clothes



carry a lucky charm

- b Read the article about superstitions in sport. What's the answer to the question in the title?

- c Match paragraphs 1–4 to topics A–D.

- A the physical effects of superstitions
- B examples of sporting superstitions
- C the disadvantages of superstitions
- D the psychological effects of superstitions

- d Read the article again. Explain why the following examples are mentioned.

Paragraph 1:

Cristiano Ronaldo's right foot and Serena Williams's ball

Paragraph 2:

lucky golf balls and lucky charms

Paragraph 3:

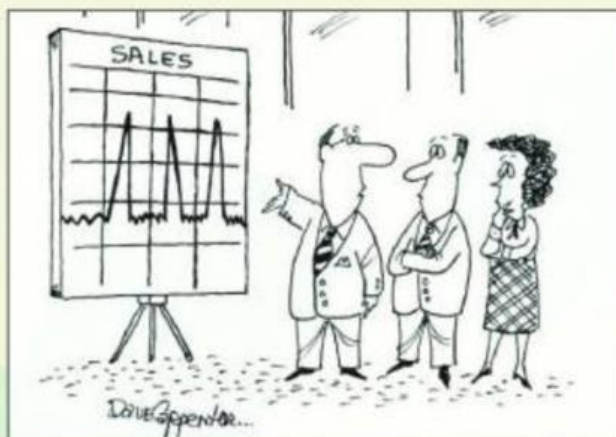
adrenaline and other chemicals

Paragraph 4:

two players with the same superstition

- e • Do you know of any other sports players who are superstitious? What do they do?
- Do you have any superstitions, e.g. when you are playing or watching sport, or when you do an exam, or when you travel?

Do 'lucky socks' really work?



"I'm not superstitious either, but those were the days Harris wore his lucky socks."

- 1 **S**port has always been full of superstitions, even for the best athletes in the world. Long-distance runner Mo Farah always shaves his head before a race. Judo star Kayla Harrison always wears the lucky socks that were a gift from her grandmother. Footballer Cristiano Ronaldo always steps onto the pitch with his right foot first. And tennis legend Serena Williams always bounces the ball five times before a first serve, and twice before a second serve.
- 2 **Do actions like this have any real effect on sports results?** According to a study at the University of Cologne, it seems that they can increase confidence and a sense of control, which might help athletes. The study showed that people who were given a golf ball that they were told was 'lucky' played better than those who used a 'normal' ball. And it isn't just sports. In another experiment, people who were allowed to carry their lucky charm performed better at memory tests than people without one. The researchers concluded that superstitions make people feel more confident, which makes them perform better.
- 3 **Superstitions may also have a positive physical effect.** Dan Abrahams, a sports psychologist, says that sporting rituals can cause the release of adrenaline and other chemicals which help the athlete to focus better.
- 4 **Most psychologists, however, say that superstitions can be bad as well as good.** Abrahams tells the story of a professional football club where two players had the same superstition – they both had to be the last person to leave the changing room before the game. They couldn't agree how to solve the problem, and it had a really negative effect on them and on the team. And what happens if you sit down to take an exam and realize you've forgotten your lucky pen?