

## Gung Hay Fat Choy

# 新年快樂

Happy Chinese New Year

Ming Shu (Chinese astrology) is believed to date back to 2637 B.C.E. when Emperor Huang Ti first introduced a calendar based on the cycles of the moon. Ironically, the word “shu” means “reckoning of fate.”

The Chinese astrological cycle takes 12 years to complete. There are twelve signs, each represented by an animal. According to an old Chinese story, before Confucius died, he was asked to bless all of the animals in China. The story tells that only twelve animals decided to come before him. It are these animals that are used in their calendar.

Similar to Western astrology, someone’s personality is governed by these animals’ signs. In addition, the Chinese believe that the elements metal, air, water, wood, and fire play a major part in how people act. To each of these elements we are positive (yang) or negative (yin) in our ways.



Chinese New Year starts with the new moon on the first day of the regular New Year and ends on the next full moon, fifteen days later. The 15<sup>th</sup> day of the Chinese New Year is called the Lantern Festival. This is celebrated at night and young children carry lanterns in a parade.

The Chinese calendar is based on a combination of both lunar and solar movements. The lunar cycle is about 29.5 days. In order to “catch-up” with the solar calendar, the Chinese add an extra month every few years out of a 19 year cycle. This is the same as adding an extra day to create a Leap Year. This is why Chinese New Year falls on a different day each year.

New Year’s Eve and New Year’s Day are family times for reunion and thanksgiving. It starts with a religious ceremony to honor Heaven and Earth, the Buddhist gods of the household, and the family ancestors. Departed relatives are remembered with great respect as they were responsible for creating the family foundations. At the New Year’s Eve dinner, the “weilu,” a place for each departed ancestor is left in their honor.

## Chinese New Year Traditions



While many Chinese today may not believe in these “do’s” and “don’ts”, these traditions and customs are still practiced in many parts of China. They are kept because the family believes that they provide continuity with the past and family identify for the future.

On New Year’s Eve, all brushes, brooms, dusters, and pans must be put away. Sweeping or dusting cannot be done until New Year’s Day for fear that good fortune will be swept away. After New Year’s Day, all dust and rubbish must be swept to the middle of the floor, picked up then put in the corners of the room. It cannot be thrown out until the fifth day, then only through the back door.

All debts must be paid up by New Year’s Eve or else the New Year will bring poverty. Many banks replace old money for new bills. In addition, never lend money to someone on New Year’s Day or else you will be lending money every day of the New Year!

Exactly at the stroke of midnight on New Year’s Eve, all doors and windows are opened to let out the old year’s spirits and allow the good spirits for the New Year to enter. Firecrackers are lit to scare away the old, evil spirits, making way for the new, good spirits. In addition, the Dragon Dance is performed through the streets just to make sure that the old spirits are chased away.

Everyone must refrain from using foul language, bad, and unlucky words. Negative terms and the word “four” (Ssu), which sounds like the word for death, are not to be uttered. Never mention death or ghosts as well as anything that happened in the old year.

If you cry on New Year’s Day, you will cry every day during the New Year. [Children are rarely punished on New Year’s Day due to this tradition]. Also, do not wash your hair on New Year’s Day as it is believed that you have just washed away all of your good luck!

Everything is red on Chinese New Year, the color that brings a sunny and bright future. Children and unmarried children each receive a little red envelope (lai see) containing money to ensure their good fortunes throughout the entire year.

The first person you meet in the New Year has great significance on how the year will become. The same applies for the first words you say or hear on New Year’s Day. It is a lucky sign to see or hear songbirds, red-colored birds, or swallows on New Year’s Day.

Do not use knives or scissors on New Year’s Day as this may cut off your fortune.

Last but not least, always consult the almanac before you leave your house on New Year’s Day. There are good and bad times to go outside, and if you leave at the wrong time, then bad fortune will be with you for the entire year.

## What's our Chinese Zodiac Sign?



**Check out your birth year and sign below then read your fortune!**

### **RAT**

[1912, 1924, 1936, 1948, 1960, 1972, 1984, 1996, 2008]

You are imaginative, charming, and truly generous to the persons you love but you are quick-tempered and critical. You are somewhat of an opportunist. You will be happy in sales, or as a writer, critic, or publicist.

### **OX**

[1913, 1925, 1937, 1949, 1961, 1973, 1985, 1997, 2009]

A born leader, you inspire confidence from all around you. You are conservative, methodical, and good with your hands. Guard against being chauvinistic and demanding. You would be a good surgeon, army general, or a hairdresser.

### **TIGER**

[1914, 1926, 1938, 1950, 1962, 1974, 1986, 1998, 2010]

You are sensitive, emotional, and capable of great love. However you have a tendency to get carried away and are stubborn about what you think is right! You are often seen as a "rebel" or "hothead." You would be an excellent manager, explorer, race-car driver or bull-fighter.

### **RABBIT**

[1915, 1927, 1939, 1951, 1963, 1975, 1987, 1999, 2011]

You are popular, affectionate, obliging, and always pleasant. You have a tendency to be over-sentimental and superficial in your ways. Being cautious and conservative, you will be successful in business but you also would be a good lawyer, diplomat, or actor.

## DRAGON

[1916, 1928, 1940, 1952, 1964, 1976, 1988, 2000, 2012]

Full of vitality and enthusiasm, the dragon is a popular individual with the reputation of being foolhardy and a “bigmouth” at times. You are intelligent, gifted and a perfectionist but also demanding on others. You are well-suited as an artist, priest, or politician.

## SNAKE

[1917, 1929, 1941, 1953, 1965, 1977, 1989, 2001, 2013]

Rich in wisdom and charm, you are romantic and deep-thinking and guided by your intuition. Avoid procrastination and being stingy towards money. Keep your sense of humor about life. The snake is most content as a teacher, philosopher, writer, psychiatrist, or a fortune teller.

## HORSE

[1918, 1930, 1942, 1954, 1966, 1978, 1990, 2002, 2014]

You are an amazing, hard worker. You are very independent yet intelligent and friendly. You are often selfish, cunning, and egotistical at times. Your sign suggests you are best as an adventurer, scientist, poet or even a politician.

## SHEEP

[1919, 1931, 1943, 1955, 1967, 1979, 1991, 2003, 2015]

Except that you often get off on the wrong foot with people, you can be charming company. You are elegant and artistic but the first to complain. You worry too much and are a pessimist. Be less dependent on material comforts and become a beachcomber, actor or gardener.

## MONKEY

[1920, 1932, 1944, 1956, 1968, 1980, 1992, 2004, 2016]

You are intelligent with a clear wit. You have a magnetic personality and well-liked. You must guard against being an opportunist and distrustful of other people. Your sign promises success in any field that you try!

子	丑	寅	卯	辰	巳
Rat	Ox	Tiger	Rabbit	Dragon	Snake
午	未	申	酉	戌	亥
Horse	Goat	Monkey	Rooster	Dog	Pig

## ROOSTER

[1921, 1933, 1945, 1957, 1969, 1981, 1993, 2005, 2017]

A hard worker, shrewd, and definite in decision making. You often speak your mind but can be hurtful to others. You are a dreamer, flashy dresser and often extravagant. You are happy as a restaurant owner, publicist, soldier, or world traveler.

## DOG

[1922, 1934, 1946, 1958, 1970, 1982, 1994, 2006, 2018]

The dog will never let you down. You are honest and faithful but you are a constant worrier. You can be a fault-finder with a sharp tongue! You will do very well in business or as a teacher, activist or even a secret agent!

## PIG

[1923, 1935, 1947, 1959, 1971, 1983, 1995, 2007, 2019]

You are a great companion and a person who is intellectually strong. Sincere, honest and tolerant in nature you expect the same from everyone else. You are incredibly naïve. Your downfall is your quest for material goods. You are best as an entertainer or even a lawyer.

