

# CHINESE NEW YEAR

## KNOWLEDGE ORGANISER

### WHAT?

Chinese New Year is also known as the **Spring Festival**. It is the most important celebration in the Chinese calendar.

Each year is named after one of the 12 animals in the **Chinese zodiac**. What year you were born in will decide what zodiac animal you are.

### CELEBRATIONS

The most fireworks in the world are set off during the evening of Chinese New Year's Eve.

Many Chinese cities have banned fireworks because of concerns about safety and air pollution.

### FOOD

For Chinese New Year, people like to eat long noodles. The longer the noodle, the longer your life will be.

Many foods have symbolic meanings...

Eggs: big, healthy family  
Shrimp: fortune and wealth

### MYTHS

Many Chinese New Year traditions come from **myths** such as Nian the monster, who was afraid of the colour red and firecrackers.

### DECORATIONS

Red is the main colour used for decorations. It is thought to scare away evil spirits and bring good fortune for the new year.

You will see lanterns, door gods, **couplets**, **kumquats** and paper cuttings of important symbols.

### FAMILY

The most important part of the celebration is **families reuniting**.

Most elderly parents live in rural villages whilst their children work in the cities, so they have to travel to see each other. It is estimated that over 1000 train tickets are bought every second!

WHAT CAN YOU DISCOVER ABOUT CHINESE NEW YEAR?

WHEN?

There is no set date for Chinese New Year as it follows the **Lunar Calendar**. We only know that it falls between January 21st and February 20th.

## TRADITIONS



**Firecrackers** are believed to scare off monsters and bad luck. People stay up on Chinese New Year's Eve to set off firecrackers at midnight.

**Money** is given to children during Chinese New Year. The money is put inside **red pockets** and given by their elders, in the hope of passing on good **fortune**.



**New clothes** are given as gifts to wear on New Year's Day. Almost everything is about removing the old and welcoming in the new. Red clothes are very lucky.

**Red decorations** are hung up everywhere for Chinese New Year. This is because red is believed to bring good luck and keep away bad spirits and monsters.



**Lantern Festival** brings a close to the Chinese New Year celebrations. This happens on the 15th. It is a time of socialising, with everyone coming together.

## THE CHINESE ZODIAC

A zodiac system has existed in Chinese culture since the Qin dynasty, more than 2,000 years ago.

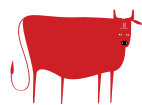
There are **12 Chinese zodiac animals** used to represent years.

Zodiac signs play a big part in Chinese culture. They determine your **fortune** for the year, marriage compatibility, career and more.



1984, 1996,  
2008, 2020

rat



1985, 1997,  
2009, 2021

ox



1986, 1998,  
2010, 2022

tiger



1987, 1999,  
2011, 2023

rabbit



1988, 2000,  
2012, 2024

dragon



1989, 2001,  
2013, 2025

snake



1990, 2002,  
2014, 2026

horse



1991, 2003,  
2015, 2027

goat



1992, 2004,  
2016, 2028

monkey



1993, 2005,  
2017, 2029

rooster



1994, 2006,  
2018, 2030

dog



1995, 2007,  
2019, 2031

pig

## GLOSSARY

**ancestor**

A person related to you who lived a long time ago.

**Buddha**

A holy man on whose life and teachings Buddhism is based.

**couplet**

Two lines of poetry next to each other, often written on red paper.

**custom**

A way of behaving or a belief that has been around for a long time.

**dumpling**

A ball of dough, filled with meat or vegetables and steamed.

**Emperor**

A male ruler of an empire. A Chinese Emperor was considered the 'Son of Heaven'.

**fortune**

A set of good or bad events that happen to you, affecting your life.

**kumquat**

A small, oval fruit that looks like an orange. The skin can be eaten.

**lion dance**

A special dance done in a lion costume to bring good luck and fortune.

**Lunar Calendar**

A calendar based on the monthly cycles of the Moon's phases.

**myth**

A traditional story which explains the early history or cultural belief of a group of people.

**Nian gao**

Also known as New Year cake. It is made of sticky rice and thought to bring a successful year.

**red pocket**

A red envelope used for elders to give money to children in order to pass on a year of good fortune.