

龍 Year of the Dragon

The Dragon is the great non-conformist and charismatic presence in the Chinese horoscope. The Chinese say that heaven and earth are balanced in the life of someone born in this year, and success seems to follow them.

Dragons are born in: 1904, 1916, 1928, 1940, 1952, 1964, 1976, 1988, 2000, 2012, 2024.*

Famous people born in the Year of the Dragon – Dragons are confident, energetic, and charismatic. They are loved, admired, and followed, but they can be loners at heart. Famous Dragons include: Sarah Bernhardt, Russell Crowe, Salvador Dali, Faye Dunaway, Sigmund Freud, Paul Getty, Joan of Arc, Bruce Lee, John Lennon, Elle Macpherson, Al Pacino, Gregory Peck, Pelé, Gough Whitlam.

Chinese name: Long, sign of luck

Colour: Greenish-blue; lucky colours: gold and black

Gems and stones: Opal, sapphire, amber

Hour: 7 am-8:59 am

Western counterpart: Aries



Dragon characteristics

Dragons dislike being ordered around, unnecessary bureaucracy, being told their ideas won't work and people who don't put one hundred percent effort into their undertakings.

- + Original, self-assured, resourceful, adaptable, courageous, independent, charismatic, generous, enthusiastic, trusting and honest.
- Arrogant, tactless, hot-headed, critical, unpredictable and quick-tempered.



The Dragon is a creature of myth and legend. Colourful and exotic, a symbol of good fortune, wisdom, and an emblem of power, the Oriental dragon is always regarded as a sacred beast with temples, pagodas and shrines built to honour them. In Eastern philosophy, the Dragon is held to be a bringer of good fortune and a holder of authority, and those people born in Dragon years are therefore to be honoured and respected.

Chinese Dragons control the rain, rivers, lakes, and seas. Being the divine mythical animal, the Dragon can ward off wandering evil spirits, protect the innocent and bestow safety to all. They have the ability to live in the seas, fly up to the heavens and coil up in the land in the form of mountains.

The characteristics of people born under the Dragon sign are tempered by one of the five Chinese elements of Wood (born 1904 or 1964), Fire (1916, 1976), Earth (1928, 1988), Metal (1940, 2000) and Water (1952, 2012).

2012 Year of the Water Dragon

23 January 2012 is the first day of the first Chinese lunar month in the Chinese Lunar Calendar system. The exact new moon time is 7.40 am Greenwich Mean Time (GMT). Year 2012 is a Chinese Water (Black) Dragon Year in the five-element system. It is the 4709th Chinese Year. The Chinese New Year Festival is 15 days in duration.

Water has a calming influence on the Dragon's bold and fiery temperament. It may not quench the Dragon's fire, but it enables the Dragon to direct it more thoughtfully, and makes this kind of Dragon more sensitive to others and more cooperative. Because these Dragons know the art of patience and do not have the same burning desire to be the focus of attention as other Dragons, they are better able to stand back from things and take an objective view of the situation. Thus they make wise judgments and are much more prepared to see eye-to-eye with other people. Even so, their actions can go wrong because of a lack of basic research and from not seeing one project through before starting on another one.

* In the Chinese calendar, based on the movement of the moon, new year's day does not fall on a fixed date. Therefore, if you were born in January or February, consult a lunar calendar chart as you may belong to the previous animal year.

Personality

Dragons have a natural charisma, are lively company, interested in the world around them and excited by new possibilities, the unusual and the unorthodox. They have great energy and self-confidence and know how to create an impression. Many Dragon people are exhibitionists, full of energy and enthusiasm; they are also proud, which is sometimes interpreted by onlookers as arrogance. They are sure of themselves and enjoy being the centre of attention, but they also have a brave and charitable side to their character. If a friend is faced by a problem or dilemma, Dragons will be there to offer help, and when others might withdraw they will step forward to help resolve the situation with authority and dignity.

Dragons are free spirits and generate excitement wherever they go. They are wild and impulsive and can make others realise their dreams. People love them because they simply feel better, and braver, when Dragons are around. They are decisive and frank, capable and lucky. They are an able judge of situations, stepping in at the right moment with an exciting or creative scheme. They can be quick-tempered and obstinate, and sometimes too outspoken, but there is usually good advice in their criticisms or suggestions.

While Dragons are always popular people, with their tempestuous characters and fiery natures, Dragons are certainly not the most comfortable friends for those of a sensitive disposition. But those people who know and love the Dragon find him or her kind and benevolent, a true champion, a terrific ally in times of trouble, and loyal. Renowned for their integrity, and being extremely trusting souls, it does not occur to Dragons that others may not be so ethical – emerge from such experiences sadder, wiser, but not vengeful.

Dragons are always able to attract friends through their generous natures, their style, and sheer magnetism, but they can be rather solitary people at heart. A Dragon's self-sufficiency can mean that he or she feels no real need for close bonds with other people.

Professions best suited to Dragons

Dragons enjoy positions of responsibility and being in charge or giving orders comes naturally. It is important for them to have new challenges and freedom of movement; if they feel trapped by their career or at the mercy of other people's decisions, they are likely to pack their bags and leave.

They have strong opinions on the planning and execution of projects. Dragons have good leadership qualities and are usually fair in your dealings, but their energy can be overwhelming. One of their challenges is to allow for the fact that some colleagues cannot match their pace, though they may be inspired by a Dragon's ideas.

Dragons are suited to a career in law, religion or the arts. They would make a good manager, entrepreneur, doctor or actor. Other careers include: computer analyst, inventor, engineer, architect, lawyer, philosopher, psychoanalyst, broker, manager, salesperson, campaigner, politician or a role in public relations, advertising or the armed forces.



新年快樂

Health and constitution

Dragons are blessed with good health, despite the fact that they burn the candle at both ends, and take breathtaking risks. They are among the most robust of the Chinese animal signs, but they can suffer ill-health as a result of stress. They commonly suffer from tension headaches, and depression or hypertension can be prevalent in Dragons caused by emotional turmoil. The best way to help themselves and keep their fiery natures under control is to establish some routine into their life and take up forms of exercise that calm the mind and spirit as well as tone the body.

Love

Dragons have an impressive presence and it is not unusual for them to have a string of admirers who are drawn by their charisma. It is easy for Dragons to find romance but hard for them to settle down. They are frustrated by emotional over-dependence or indecision and need someone who gives them the space to express themselves, who is witty and intelligent, and who is not threatened by their exuberance.

It takes someone tough, clever, or extremely easygoing to be a Dragon's partner, because, despite a deep-seated sentimentality and superficial irresistibility, they can be moody and insensitive. People born in the Year of the Rat or Monkey make the best partners for Dragons; conflict can be expected with Oxen, Goats and Dogs. Once Dragon folk become committed, they are unlikely to ever roam again.

Children

Parenting does not come naturally or easily to the Dragons, however, they are proud of their offspring as any of their other achievements, and are eager to let people know about their child's talents and accomplishments. Renowned for their generosity, Dragons lavish their children with toys, equipment, and spending money. Dragons take their parental responsibilities seriously, like their other endeavours in life. They are kind but firm, ambitious for their children's future, and protective of their welfare.



Children born in the Year of the Dragon have colourful characters and are noisy, active and imaginative. Their imagination and curiosity can land young Dragons in hot water. Hungry to experience all that life holds for them, young Dragons are easily misunderstood and may be considered mischievous or hyperactive; others who are loners may withdraw into their own world of make-believe.

The Chinese dragon pearl and statues

Chinese Dragons are associated with a pearl of wisdom or potentiality – either pursuing it, or held in the mouth, under the chin, or in the claws. This glowing pearl is said to be the image of thunder, the moon, the sun and their source of supernatural powers and dragons protect it fiercely.

The pearl is most often depicted as a spiral or a globe. In some paintings it is sometimes red, sometimes gold, sometimes the bluish white of a true pearl. The pearl is often accompanied by little jagged flashes that seem to spark out from it, like flames; and it almost always has an appendage in the form of a small undulating sprout, not unlike the first young shoot from a bean.

Dragon statues should be placed on a high side table at eye level; avoid placing Dragons above our eye level to ensure they are under our control. For career success, place a dragon behind you at work to ensure you are constantly improving and achieving your goals. Placing the Dragon near water features like aquariums or fountains can give good results.

The year ahead

Drama characterises the Dragon Year, both in lavish events and in unpredictability. The year is marked at its beginning and end by significant international developments. Financially, risks will be taken – fortunes will be made and lost. The bizarre and the unexpected are associated with this sign. Dragons are energetic, flamboyant, extroverted, gifted, original, exciting, and utterly irrepressible. Everything Dragon folk do is on a grand scale – big ideas, extravagant gestures, massive ambitions. The performing arts, fashion, and cultural events come under favourable auspices - the more original, the better. Starting a business or initiating a major project in this year will all bring success.

As the Dragon brings good fortune, this is an auspicious year in which to get married, and also to have a baby, since Dragon children bring luck to the household. Children born during Dragon Years enjoy health, wealth, and long life.



Chinese calendar

The Chinese calendar uses the Stem-Branch system to count the days, months and years. There are 10 Stems and 12 Branches in this system and they are used together to form a cycle of 60 counting systems.

Stems are named by the Yin-Yang and Five Elements (Metal, Water, Wood, Fire and Earth). The Stem sequence order is Yang Wood, Yin Wood, Yang Fire, Yin Fire, Yang Earth, Yin Earth, Yang Metal, Yin Metal, Yang Water and Yin Water. Branches use the animal names. The Branch sequence order is Rat, Ox, Tiger, Rabbit, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Goat, Monkey, Rooster, Dog and Pig. The 60 year cycle begins with Wooden Rat and ends with Water Pig.

Forthcoming Chinese New Year dates:

- 23 January 2012
- 10 February 2013 (Snake)
- 31 January 2014 (Horse)
- 19 February 2015 (Sheep/Goat)

History



Clean Day - 25th lunar day of 12th lunar month

Because the God of Stove left the house on the 24th of 12th lunar month, people start to clean the entire house on the next day, the 25th of 12th lunar month. Every corner is dusted, windows are cleaned and rooms washed so the house can be decorated for the coming new year.

Before the Tang dynasty, cleaning house was a religious ceremony to get rid of disease. Clean day was set on the 24th lunar day of 12th lunar month in Sung dynasty. Today, depending on geographic area, some people start the cleaning any time between the 24th and 26th day of 12th lunar month.



Cake Day (26th lunar day of 12th Lunar Month)

The Chinese traditionally make different kinds of rice cakes to worship the gods on the Chinese New Year's Eve. The most popular sweet cakes are Nian-Gao and Fa-Gao. In Chinese, 'Nian' is Year and 'Gao' is Cake. So Nian-Gao means Year Cake. Since Nian-Gao is made of glutinous sweet rice and Nian has the same sound as the Chinese character for 'sticky', Nian-Gao is also called Sticky Cake. 'Fa' literally means Prosperity. 'Gao' has a similar sound to the Chinese character for 'High'. Eating Fa-Gao helps people's career, wealth and health to improve.

Nian-Gao can be cut into pieces, then fried or deep-fried. Nian-Gao is very tasty right after frying. Fa-Gao can be re-heated or re-steamed before serving.

Lucky red envelopes

'Hong Bao', also known as lucky money, often carries boundless blessings. Red envelopes are given at happiness occasions, such as New Year's day, weddings, or birthdays and are given out to signify good fortune and good energy, especially when the money consists of crisp new notes with fresh 'chi' energy. The amount of cash inside the red envelope is usually an even number.

Many older Chinese people say that the red envelope is given to symbolise longevity for the bearer. By giving children red envelopes, the older person "borrows" the young 'chi' from children, and in exchange, the children receive lucky money in the red envelope.

The use of red stems from religious rituals and is considered an auspicious colour by the Chinese. Before the introduction of paper, red pigment on cloth or red thread would most likely have been used. Today, red envelopes are made of paper, come in different sizes and designs with a combination of blessings and lucky symbols to wish good fortune, wealth and happiness.

Over time, the practice of giving red envelopes stuffed with lucky money has flourished. Lucky red envelopes are often placed on appropriate items or places in the home or office to bring good Feng Shui, to create or attract positive 'yang' energy to help bring harmony, happiness and success.

The Chinese believe that the red envelope will bring good luck to the person who receives it and to the person who gives it. The more you give out, the more luck comes back to you.