



## LESSON B.2

# CHINESE ZODIAC (TWELVE ZODIAC)

**十二生肖 SHÍ'ÈR SHĒNGXIÀO**

# LESSON B.1 REVISION

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Construct words/phrases from the below characters:



欢迎

huānyíng

新年

xīnnián

忙

máng

我来自

wǒ láizì

学习

xuéxí

我有

wǒ yǒu

我喜欢

wǒ xǐhuān

快乐

kuàilè

看电影

kàn diànyǐng

两个孩子

liǎng gè háizi

什么呢?

shénme ne

大家

dàjiā

普通话

pǔtōnghuà

英国

yīngguó



## 起源 qǐyuán

- The **Chinese Zodiac/Twelve Zodiac** 十二生肖 (*shí'èr shēngxiào*) is based on a **twelve-year cycle**, each year in that cycle related to an **animal sign**.
- A zodiac system has existed in Chinese culture since the **Qin dynasty**, more than **2,000 years ago** 两千年前 (*liǎng qiānnián qián*). The zodiacs originally had something to do with the worship of **animals** 动物 (*dòngwù*)
- Zodiac signs play an integral part in **Chinese culture** 中国文化 (*zhōngguó wénhuà*), with different **meanings and characteristics** assigned to each animal. This in turn gave rise to various compatibilities (and incompatibilities) between each zodiac, and play a major role in marriage and career decisions, fortune-telling and more!

## Legend 传说 (*chuánshuō*)

- One legend says that the **Jade Emperor** 玉皇大帝 (*yù huáng dà dì*) needed to choose 12 animals as **palace guards**.
- Ox was first in line, but Rat secretly climbed onto its back and jumped in front of it. Tiger and Dragon thought it was unfair, but they could only settle behind Ox. Rabbit found it unfair too. He wanted to race with Dragon and succeeded.
- This angered Dog, who bit Rabbit in a fit and was sent to the back as punishment. Snake, Horse, Goat, Monkey and Rooster fought amongst themselves as well. Boar came last as he stopped off along the way to eat a meal!



## 十二生肖 *shí'èr shēngxiào*

rat	ox	tiger	rabbit	dragon	snake
鼠	牛	虎	兔	龙	蛇
<i>shǔ</i>	<i>niú</i>	<i>hǔ</i>	<i>tù</i>	<i>lóng</i>	<i>shé</i>
horse	goat	monkey	rooster	dog	boar/pig
马	羊	猴	鸡	狗	猪
<i>mǎ</i>	<i>yáng</i>	<i>hóu</i>	<i>jī</i>	<i>gǒu</i>	<i>zhū</i>

# CHINESE SPRING FESTIVAL



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## Happy New Year 新年快乐 xīnnián kuàilè

- In China, the most important holiday of the year is the one-week **Chinese New Year**, fondly called **Spring Festival** 春节 (**chūnjié**). Hence, "Happy New Year" greeting can also be **新春快乐** (**xīnchūn kuàilè**).
- It begins on the first day of the first month per **lunar calendar** and ends with **Lantern Festival** 元宵节 (**yuánxiāo jié**) which is on the 15th day of the same month.
- In 2024, it falls on 10th February, which marks the beginning of **Year of the Dragon** 龙年 (**lóng nián**).
- It is the time for the whole families to get together and enjoy delicious foods and happy times, a similar one like Christmas holiday to the westerners.
- **Red envelop/packet** 紅包: **hóngbāo** (in Mandarin), **lai see** (in Cantonese) is a monetary gift given out by married couples to single people, regardless of age, or by older to younger ones.
- **Lion dance** 舞狮 (**wǔ shī**): bring good luck and fortune.



### Congratulations on getting rich

恭喜发财

**gōng xǐ fā cái** (in Mandarin)  
**gong hei fat choy** (in Cantonese)

# NEW YEAR'S GREETINGS



恭喜，恭喜！

*gōngxǐ, gōngxǐ*

Congratulations!  
(meaning "best wishes")

祝您新春大吉！

*zhù nín xīnchūn dàjí*

Wishing you huge  
blessings in the New Year!

恭喜您，我祝您龙年行大运！

*gōngxǐ nín, wǒ zhù nín lóng nián xíng dà yùn*

Best wishes to you. I  
wish you good luck in the  
Year of the Dragon!

您也是！

*nín yěshì*

You too!

# NEW YEAR RESOLUTION



恭喜发财，红包拿来！

*gōngxǐ fācái, hóngbāo ná lái*

Wishing you  
wealth and prosperity; give  
me a red envelope!

你的新年愿望是什么？

*nǐ de xīnnián yuànwàng shì shénme*

What is your new year  
resolution?

我希望每个人都安全、健康，你呢？

*wǒ xiāng měi gèrén dōu ānquán, jiànkāng,  
nǐ ne*

I wish peace and  
(good) health to everyone.  
How about you?

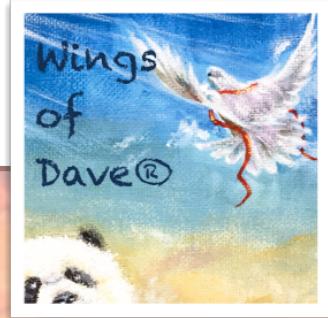
我要去健身房，我需要减肥。

*wǒ yào qù jiànshēnfáng,  
wǒ xūyào jiǎnféi*

I'm going to  
the gym. I need to lose  
weight.

# NEW YEAR SONG - CONGRATULATIONS

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Congratulations

<https://youtu.be/sf0btvROwXQ>

恭喜  
gōngxǐ

street

大街  
dàjiē

everyone

每个人  
měi gèrén

the first word

第一句话  
dì yī jù huà

winter

冬天  
dōngtiān

news

消息  
xiāoxī

warmth

温暖  
wēnnuǎn

spring breeze

春风  
chūnfēng

land

大地  
dàdì

ice and snow

冰雪  
bīngxuě

see

看  
kàn

heard

听到  
tīng dào

many/much

多少  
duōshǎo

challenge

困难  
kùnnán

trial

磨练  
mó liàn

hope

盼望  
pànwàng

# NEW YEAR SONG LYRIC 1



Every street and alley  
每条大街小巷  
*měi tiáo dàjiē xiǎo xiàng*

in everyone's mouth  
每个人的嘴里  
*měi gèrén de zuǐ lǐ*

The first word when meeting  
见面第一句话  
*jiànmiàn dì yī jù huà*

just congratulations  
就是恭喜恭喜  
*jiùshì gōngxǐ gōngxǐ*

Congratulations, congratulations, congratulations  
to you  
恭喜恭喜恭喜你呀  
*gōngxǐ gōngxǐ gōngxǐ nǐ ya*

Congratulations, congratulations, congratulations  
to you  
恭喜恭喜恭喜你  
*gōngxǐ gōngxǐ gōngxǐ nǐ*

Winter has come to an end  
冬天已到尽头  
*dōngtiān yǐ dào jìntóu*

really good news  
真是好的消息  
*zhēnshí hǎo de xiāoxī*

warm spring breeze  
温暖的春风  
*wēnnuǎn de chūnfēng*

It will awake the land  
就要吹醒大地  
*jiù yào chuī xǐng dàdì*

Congratulations, congratulations, congratulations  
to you  
恭喜恭喜恭喜你呀  
*gōngxǐ gōngxǐ gōngxǐ nǐ ya*

Congratulations, congratulations, congratulations  
to you  
恭喜恭喜恭喜你  
*gōngxǐ gōngxǐ gōngxǐ nǐ*

# NEW YEAR SONG LYRIC 2



The vast ice and snow melted  
浩浩冰雪融解  
*hào hào bīngxuě róngjiě*

Seeing plum blossoms spilling out  
眼看梅花吐蕊  
*yǎnkàn méihuā tǔ ruǐ*

The long night has passed  
漫漫长夜过去  
*màn màn chángyè guòqù*

Heard a rooster crow  
听到一声鸡啼  
*tīng dào yīshēng jī tí*

Congratulations, congratulations, congratulations  
to you  
恭喜恭喜恭喜你呀  
*gōngxǐ gōngxǐ gōngxǐ nǐ ya*

Congratulations, congratulations, congratulations  
to you  
恭喜恭喜恭喜你  
*gōngxǐ gōngxǐ gōngxǐ nǐ*

After so much challenge  
经过多少困难  
*jīngguò duōshǎo kùnnán*

experiencing so many trials  
历经多少磨练  
*lìjīng duōshǎo mó liàn*

How many hearts are hopes  
多少心儿盼望  
*duōshǎo xīn er pànwàng*

Looking forward to the news of spring  
盼望春的消息  
*pànwàng chūn de xiāoxī*

Congratulations, congratulations, congratulations  
to you  
恭喜恭喜恭喜你呀  
*gōngxǐ gōngxǐ gōngxǐ nǐ ya*

Congratulations, congratulations, congratulations  
to you  
恭喜恭喜恭喜你  
*gōngxǐ gōngxǐ gōngxǐ nǐ*

# OTHER MAJOR FESTIVALS



English	Chinese	Pinyin	Description
<b>Yuanxiao Festival</b> (aka Lantern Festival)	元宵节	<i>yuánxiāo jié</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Falls on the <b>15th day of the first lunar month</b>, marking the end of the Chinese Spring.</li> <li><b>Activity:</b> enjoy beautiful lanterns of different sizes and shapes at night.</li> <li><b>Food:</b> 元宵 <i>yuánxiāo</i> or 汤圆 <i>tāngyuán</i> - small dumpling balls made of glutinous rice flour.</li> </ul>
<b>Mid Autumn Festival</b> (aka Mooncake Festival)	中秋节	<i>zhōngqiū jié</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Originated from the worship of the <b>full moon</b> (auspicious symbol of harmony and luck), it falls on the <b>15th day of the 8th lunar month</b>.</li> <li><b>Activity:</b> family reunion, similar to Thanksgiving Day.</li> <li><b>Food:</b> 月饼 <i>yuèbǐng</i> - mooncake, made from red bean or lotus seed paste centred with salted duck egg yolk.</li> </ul>
<b>Duanwu Festival</b> (aka Dragon Boat Festival)	端午节	<i>duānwǔ jié</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It falls on the <b>fifth day of the fifth Chinese lunar month</b>.</li> <li><b>Activity:</b> dragon-boat race.</li> <li><b>Food:</b> 粽子 <i>zòng zi</i> - glutinous rice wrapped with reed leaves.</li> </ul>
<b>The National Day of China</b>	国庆	<i>guóqìng</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It falls on <b>October 1st</b>.</li> <li><b>Activity:</b> fireworks and concerts.</li> </ul>
<b>Qingming Festival</b> (aka Tomb Sweeping Day)	清明节	<i>qīngmíng jié</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It falls on one day <b>between April 4th and 6th</b>.</li> <li><b>Activity:</b> offerings to ancestors.</li> </ul>
<b>Chongyang Festival</b> (aka Double Ninth Festival)	重阳节	<i>chóngyáng jié</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It falls on the <b>9th day of the 9th month</b> of the Chinese lunar calendar.</li> <li><b>Activity:</b> climb mountains.</li> <li><b>Food:</b> eat Chongyang cake - baked and steamed, made up of rice flour and sugar, then decorated with jujube, chestnuts and almonds. Drink 菊花酒 <i>júhuā jiǔ</i> chrysanthemum wine.</li> </ul>

# CULTURE - CHINESE SUPERSTITIONS

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## 迷信 *míxìn*



Chinese culture is rich in beliefs, customs and superstitions that vary greatly from those in the West.

### Red

- Unlucky colours: white 白色 (*bái sè*) and black 黑色 (*hēi sè*) are both associated with mourning and loss.
- Happy colour: red 红色 (*hóng sè*) is the colour of the national flag, and it represents happiness. In traditional wedding ceremonies, the bride would wear a red dress. During Spring Festival, everywhere is decorated in red.



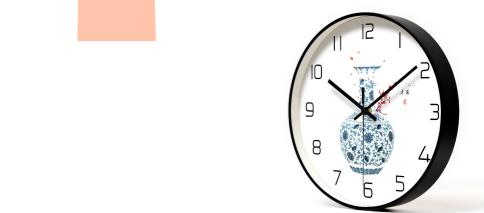
### No Sweeping at Spring Festival

- Sweeping 扫地 (*sǎodì*) during the beginning of Spring Festival may mean sweeping away all the good fortune.



### No Washing Your Hair on New Year's Day

- Hair 发 (*fǎ*) has the same pronunciation and character as 'fa' in 发财 (*fācái*), which means 'to become wealthy'. Hence, washing your hair is seen as "washing your fortune away".



### Never giving someone a clock

- Giving a clock 送钟 (*sòng zhōng*) sounds similar to "bid farewell to someone on their deathbed" 送终 (*sòng zhōng*).



### Chopstick Etiquette

- Never stick your chopsticks 筷子 (*kuài zi*) in a bowl of rice as this resembles the sight of incense 香 (*xiāng*) at a tomb.



### Long Noodle

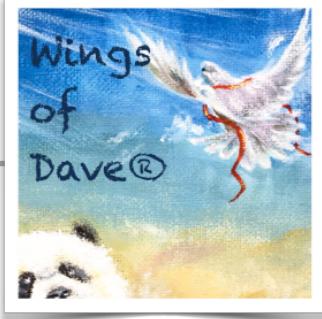
- Noodle 面 (*miàn*) is a symbol of longevity. Hence do not cut your noodle. Keep it as long as it can be.



## 大熊猫 *dà xióngmāo*

- Panda is not part of 12 zodiac animals 生肖 (*shēngxiào*). Why? In ancient times, panda was considered as **monster** 怪物 (*guàiwù*). The elevation of panda to China's national symbol happened gradually only over the last century. Chinese zodiac dates back over 2,000 years.
- Do you really know pandas?
  - ① A giant panda weights more than 45 kilos (100 pounds), and can be about 1.5 meters (5 feet) long!
  - ② Giant pandas are good at climbing trees and can also swim.
  - ③ Pandas go from pink to black and white.
  - ④ Pandas have carnivorous teeth, but they eat bamboo and fruit.
  - ⑤ An adult can eat 12-38 kilos of bamboo per day!
  - ⑥ A panda can poop 28 kilos per day!
  - ⑦ Pandas have 6 toes to grasp bamboo.
  - ⑧ Pandas are the face of animal rights.
  - ⑨ Pandas rely on spatial memory, not visual memory.
  - ⑩ Pandas are "lazy" – eating and sleeping make their day.

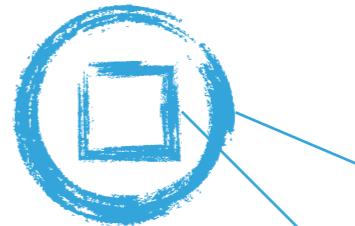




外圆内方, 君子和而不同

(wài yuán nèi fāng, jūn zǐ hé ér bùtóng)

**Smooth on the surface, firm at heart; a noble person gets along with others, but does not necessarily agree with them.**



做人要圆, 对外要圆融  
Be harmonious with outside

做事有方, 对内有准则  
Set principles within

- The former Chinese Premier, **Mr Zhou En-lai** 周恩來 once shared his take on the Chinese Zodiac.
- Our Chinese ancestors were very wise. They arranged the twelve zodiac signs in pairs to express their hopes and wishes for the generation that came after them.
- **Rat and cow:** The rat represents **wisdom** and the cow **diligence**. Wisdom and diligence must operate in harmony. If there is wisdom but no diligence in applying it, it becomes valueless wit. On the other hand, if there is diligence but no wisdom, it's an act of folly. That's why wisdom and diligence must go hand in hand.
- **Tiger and rabbit:** The tiger represents **courage** and the rabbit **caution**. These two qualities must work closely together to have a better chance to achieve success. Without carefulness, courage becomes recklessness. Similarly, without courage, carefulness becomes cowardice. Therefore, when we demonstrate our restraint, please do not think that we do not have the courage to fight for social justice.
- **Dragon and snake:** They represent **strength** and **flexibility**. Strength without flexibility becomes brittle, like hard cast iron. Without strength, flexibility becomes meaningless.
- **Horse and goat:** The horse represents the ability to **gallop to success**. The goat represents the ability to be **considerate** and have compassion. If a person only looks after himself as he pursues his goal and with no consideration for others, he will face obstacles from the people around him. However, if a person only looks after others and seek only to be amiable, he will not have a sense of direction. That's why the spirit of the horse and virtues of the goat must be applied in harmony with each other.
- **Monkey and chicken:** The monkey represents **agility** whereas the chicken represents **stability** as it crows regularly on time. The qualities of agility and stability must be tightly coupled together. If you are constantly changing goals and objectives, no matter how good the policy, the benefits cannot be reaped. However, if you focused on having stability and refuse to change, you will not have a better future. When these two qualities operate in synergy, it is one of the basic imperatives to achieve success.
- **Dog and pig:** The dog represents **loyalty** while the pig represents **good nature**. If a person is loyal but does not have a good nature, he will be blindly following others. On the other hand, if he has a good nature but does not have loyalty, he will have no people and principles to guide him. That's why whether its loyalty to a country, loyalty to a team, or loyalty to an ideal, you need to ensure that good nature is working alongside with it. In that way, you can have a deep-seated sense of loyalty that **comes from the heart**. This is why the Chinese believes that the **outer core must be in alignment with the inner core** (外圆内方,君子和而不同).

# CLASSROOM EXERCISE B.2 – NEW YEAR RESOLUTION

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- Working with the person next to you, ask about their new year resolution and share with the class.

**What is your new year resolution?**

你的新年愿望是什么?

*nǐ de xīnnián yuànwàng shì shénme*

**I wish...**

我希望.....

*wǒ xiāng*

**I think...**

我想.....

*wǒ xiǎng*

**I want...**

我要.....

*wǒ yào*



**exercise more**

多运动

*duō yùndòng*



**learn a new skill**

学习一个新的爱好

*xuéxí yīgè xīn de àihào*



**quit smoking**

戒烟

*jièyān*



**win lottery**

中彩票

*zhòng cǎipiào*



**get organized**

组织起来

*zǔzhī qǐlái*



**eat healthy**

吃得健康

*chī dé jiànkāng*



**save money**

省钱

*shěng qián*



**buy new house**

买新房

*mǎi xīnfáng*