

# Chinese New Year Cheat Sheet



## What is Chinese New Year?

Chinese New Year marks the start of the traditional Chinese Calendar. It's sometimes called the Lunar New Year or the Spring Festival. It's the most important holiday in the Chinese calendar, which is a lunar based calendar, hence why the dates change each year.



## Who celebrates Chinese New Year?

Obviously the Chinese do! But did you know, here in the UK, it's becoming a major occasion in it's own right?

Chinese New Year parades and festivities are celebrated in most major cities around the country, and Greeting Cards are popular everywhere, regardless of local Chinese demographics.



## What's the story of Chinese New Year?

Chinese New Year runs in cycles of 12, with each year named after a specific animal. The mythological story of how this came about is interesting. The Jade Emperor organised a race across a river, and declared the first 12 animals to win the race would have a year named after them in the same

order that they emerged from the river. The Rat & the Cat, who were good friends at the time, hitched a lift on the back of the Ox. Just as they approached the finish, the Rat pushed the Cat back into the river, and jumped off the Ox to claim first place. The Ox came second, followed in order by the

Tiger, the Rabbit, the Dragon, the Snake, the Horse, the Goat, the Monkey, the Rooster, the Dog and finally the Boar. The poor Cat didn't come in the first 12, and so didn't receive the honor of having a year named after him. To this day, Cats and Rats do not get on with each other.



## When should Chinese New Year cards be placed on display?

It's a good idea to put Chinese New Year cards on display as soon as the (Gregorian) new year starts, as Chinese New Year is usually the first major ethnic festival of the year. However, we recommend you order your stock as early as August/September.

With so many occasions later in the year, Chinese New Year is often forgotten by retailers, & we usually receive a rush of orders straight after Christmas – with some retailers missing out due to stock shortages.

## How is Chinese New Year celebrated?

Chinese New Year actually lasts for 16 days. Before the New Year starts, houses are cleaned thoroughly before being decorated for the festival. Festivities begin on New Year's Eve with family reunions, and "lucky" money given to children in red envelopes. There is a tradition of 'praying' by making offerings to departed ancestors, with the belief that their spirits will protect their descendants. Chinese New Year culminates in a grand lantern parade and lavish fireworks.

