

## Lunar New Year

What do you know about Lunar New Year? Read this article to find out how people celebrate this special time of year.

## Instructions

Do the preparation exercise first. Then read the article and do the other exercises.

## Preparation

Match the definitions (a-h) with the vocabulary (1-8).

### Vocabulary

1. ...h... the lunar calendar
2. .... to name something after someone or something
3. .... traditional
4. .... a characteristic
5. .... respect
6. .... a generation
7. .... fortune
8. .... a firecracker

### Definition

- a. part of the culture of a country or group of people
- b. politeness and care for someone or something we believe is important
- c. all the people of about the same age in a family or group
- d. a small paper or card container that explodes and makes a loud noise, used during celebrations
- e. the good or bad things that happen to you in your life
- f. something that shows what sort of person you are, by the way you behave, feel and think
- g. to give something the same name as another person or thing
- h. a way of organising the days, weeks and months of the year, based on the position of the moon

## Lunar New Year

Lunar calendars depend on the position of the moon, so the date of the new year changes each year, and different places start the new year at different times. In China and in many other places, like Vietnam, Singapore and Korea, Lunar New Year is usually celebrated in January or February, and it's a very important festival.

## Lunar New Year animals

Each year in the lunar calendar is named after an animal. There is a traditional story about these animals. The Jade Emperor – an important god in traditional Chinese religions – wanted to find a way to measure time. He asked all the animals in the country to have a race. He named the 12 years of the lunar calendar after the animals that finished the race.

The first animal to finish was the rat, so the first year is the Year of the Rat. The second year is the Year of the Ox. The third year is the Year of the Tiger, then the Year of the Rabbit, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Goat, Monkey, Rooster, Dog and Pig. In many countries, the animals are the same as these, but in some places they are a bit different.

After 12 years, the animals repeat. This means that after the Year of the Pig, it's the Year of the Rat again. And so, every year has an animal, and every animal has certain characteristics, for example the rabbit is kind and polite. So, if you were born in a Year of the Rabbit, you are probably kind and polite too! What year were you born? What is your animal?

## A family celebration

Lunar New Year is a family celebration. Children give their parents and grandparents good wishes for the new year and show their respect for the older generation. Older members of the family give children money, usually in small packets. These packets are red in China and Vietnam, because red is a lucky colour.

## Traditional food

People eat traditional food at Lunar New Year. In China, many people eat fish because they think it brings good fortune. In Korea, people eat a special soup with beef, vegetables and pieces of rice cake. The rice cake pieces are round and look like coins and money.

## Other traditions

There are many other Lunar New Year traditions. For example, in Vietnam, people believe that the first person to enter their home in the new year will decide their luck for the next year.

In Korea, families often play traditional board games together.

In China, many people have firecrackers, which burn and make a loud noise. In the streets, dancers dress up as a lion or a dragon. They dance to music and drums.

People celebrate Lunar New Year in many different ways, but all the celebrations are about wishing everyone good things for the next year. Happy Lunar New Year!

## Tasks

## Task 1

Circle true or false for these sentences.

- |   |      |  |
|---|------|--|
| 1. Lunar New Year is on the same date every year.                                 | True | <input checked="" type="radio"/> False |
| 2. The years in the lunar calendar have the same names as animals.                | True | <input type="radio"/> False            |
| 3. For Lunar New Year, children in China and Vietnam get money in blue packets.   | True | <input type="radio"/> False            |
| 4. In China, people usually eat fish at Lunar New Year.                           | True | <input type="radio"/> False            |
| 5. In Korea, people put money in their soup.                                      | True | <input type="radio"/> False            |
| 6. In Vietnam, the first person to come into your house at New Year is important. | True | <input type="radio"/> False            |

## Task 2

Circle the correct answer.

- The Jade Emperor asked the animals to have a \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. fight                       b. race                      c. party
- There are \_\_\_\_\_ animals in the Chinese calendar.  
a. seven                      b. ten                      c. twelve
- The first year in the Chinese calendar is the Year of the \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. Rat                      b. Rabbit                      c. Dragon
- At Lunar New Year, children show special respect for their \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. brothers and sisters    b. friends and classmates    c. parents and grandparents
- In Korea, families often play \_\_\_\_\_ together.  
a. music                      b. board games                      c. football
- In China, dancers often dress up as \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. a lion or a dragon        b. a tiger or a snake                      c. a horse or a rabbit

**Write and draw**

Do people celebrate Lunar New Year where you live? How do you celebrate the new year?  
Write about it and draw a picture.

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## Answers

### Preparation task

1. h
2. g
3. a
4. f
5. b
6. c
7. e
8. d

### Task 1

1. False
2. True
3. False
4. True
5. False
6. True

### Task 2

1. b
2. c
3. a
4. c
5. b
6. a