

ChineseZodiac

Quick Reference Guide — The 12 Animals, Five Elements, and 60-Year Cycle

The Twelve Animals in Order

The Chinese zodiac assigns one of twelve animal signs to each lunar year. The fixed order repeats every 12 years.

#	Animal	Fixed Element	Yin/Yang	Branch
1	Rat	Water	Yang	■
2	Ox	Earth	Yin	■
3	Tiger	Wood	Yang	■
4	Rabbit	Wood	Yin	■
5	Dragon	Earth	Yang	■
6	Snake	Fire	Yin	■
7	Horse	Fire	Yang	■
8	Goat	Earth	Yin	■
9	Monkey	Metal	Yang	■
10	Rooster	Metal	Yin	■
11	Dog	Earth	Yang	■
12	Pig	Water	Yin	■

The Five Elements (■■■)

Each zodiac year is paired with one of five elements. The element cycles every two years, producing a 10-year pattern: Wood, Wood, Fire, Fire, Earth, Earth, Metal, Metal, Water, Water. Together, the 12-animal cycle and 10-year element cycle produce the full 60-year zodiac cycle.

Element	Chinese	Season	Direction	Yang Animals	Yin Animals
Wood	■ mù	Spring	East	Tiger	Rabbit
Fire	■ hu■	Summer	South	Horse	Snake
Earth	■ t■	Late Summer	Center	Dragon, Dog	Ox, Goat
Metal	■ j■n	Autumn	West	Monkey	Rooster
Water	■ shu■	Winter	North	Rat	Pig

Key Rules

Year boundary: Zodiac years begin on Lunar New Year (late Jan to mid-Feb), not January 1. Birthdays in January/February may belong to the previous sign.

Animal order: Rat → Ox → Tiger → Rabbit → Dragon → Snake → Horse → Goat → Monkey → Rooster → Dog → Pig. Fixed, never changes.

Element cycle: Each element lasts 2 years. Full pattern: Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal, Water (repeat).

60-year cycle: 12 animals × 5 elements × 2-year element stays = full 60-year alignment. A Fire Horse year (2026) last occurred in 1966, next in 2086.

Compatibility: Four trines (groups of 3 harmonious signs), six harmonies (complementary pairs), six clashes (opposite pairs).

Ben Ming Nian: Your own zodiac year, returning every 12 years. Traditionally a year of heightened opportunity and turbulence; the custom is to wear red and approach big decisions with care.

Recent & Upcoming Zodiac Years

Year	Zodiac Sign	Lunar New Year
2020	Metal Rat	Jan 25
2021	Metal Ox	Feb 12
2022	Water Tiger	Feb 1
2023	Water Rabbit	Jan 22
2024	Wood Dragon	Feb 10
2025	Wood Snake	Jan 29
2026	Fire Horse	Feb 17
2027	Fire Goat	Feb 6
2028	Earth Monkey	Jan 26
2029	Earth Rooster	Feb 13
2030	Metal Dog	Feb 3