

This is a printer friendly version with many of the photos removed

The history of red envelopes (Ang Pow) and how to make your own.

© Written by Michael Hanna and kindly assisted by his talented niece Hannah Sacco (age 11)

Ang Pow red envelopes also known as “red packets” “Ang Pow” “laisee” “lai see” “hung bao” or “Hung-Bao”. They are considered extremely auspicious to receive as a gift and even more auspicious if they contain money. They are commonly used for Chinese New Year, weddings, birthdays or any other important event.

The image used on the front of a red envelope wish blessings and good wishes of long life, prosperity and good health. Through the years, artists have always found new ways to improve the message of good tidings such as carps swimming amongst flowering lotus, the fabled creatures of dragon and phoenix, Chinese zodiac animals depending on the year it will be used, peonies in full bloom, the three immortals, golden pineapples, Buddha’s and children. They are actually very beautiful and the varied designs we have seen over the years have been outstanding. As a company we hand pick every design as the quality and presentation is very important. These are sent free with every order we send containing Chinese i-ching coins for extra luck.

When giving money on festive or auspicious occasions, you should never put money in a white envelope or you would face the resentment of the recipient! Money wrapped in white envelopes is given when the occasion is sad, like funerals, when a gift of money is given to help with the funeral costs. This is called 'Pak Kum' money for the family of the departed. So if you ever come across a Chinese client please think twice about giving his or her fee in a white envelope although in our western countries it would be unlikely to offend.

The two projects below make a lovely job for the young and old, especially for children as it also teaches the cultures of other countries, so if you are a school teacher please feel free to download and use in your classroom. You can download the printer friendly version by [clicking this link](#). This can also be saved to your computer hard drive so you can email onto friends and family. My niece Hannah Sacco printed this one below in black and white and then spent a few hours colouring it in, thank you Hannah for allowing me to show your stunning piece of work.

Handmade from the template below and coloured by my 11 year old niece Hannah.



Lots of Love
From
Hannah



The story of Ang Pow red envelopes.

The story of “*ang pow*” dates back to the Sung Dynasty in China. A village called Chang-Chieu was at the time terrorised by a huge demon. No one was capable of defeating it, not even their greatest warriors or statesmen. However, a young orphan, armed with a magical sword inherited from his ancestors, fought the evil demon and eventually killed it. The villagers were triumphant and the elders presented the brave young man with a red envelope (more like a red pouch I would imagine) filled with money for his courage in saving them. Since then, the *ang pow* has become a part of traditional Chinese customs.

How much do you place inside the red envelope?

It depends on the situation. If you give red envelopes to children for the New Year, age will be an important factor. Usually the older the children are, the more money they will get. For a child of five years old, two pounds will be fine. The amount contained has to be in even numbers. Even numbers are auspicious and odd numbers are perceived as denoting loneliness. For example, it could be two pounds, ten or twenty pounds. You can amass on New Years day a great deal of money as a child.

We often supply our red envelopes for weddings and if you do attend a Chinese or even a western wedding make a gift of money in the red envelope. But it should be relative to your financial situation and you shouldn't overdo it as it can also be considered as showing off if you give more than you can afford. It is similar for birthdays although the red packets usually contain less money since birthdays are not considered as important as weddings.

Giving red packets to employees prior to the New Year is also very common. This can be either a gift or a bonus. It is also believed that should you bequest them your gift their good fortunes will come back to your company.

The number of coins or notes in the ang pow may take advantage of the Chinese homophones. For instance, you can give a favourable amount ending with eight (8), as it sounds like fortune in Chinese, or nine (9), which sounds like longevity. Four (4) is **not** a good number to give as it sounds like death. You should always give money in even numbers though as to receive one or three or any other uneven number would be

considered unlucky. Although to receive one Chinese i-ching coin in the envelope is considered very lucky.

When are Ang Pows given?

The practice of giving ang pow may be centuries old, but it is still as popular as ever. During Chinese New Year, they are given by married couples to small children, teenagers and unmarried adults. So it helps if you have a rich aunt or uncle as the gifts can be very large.

They can be given at any time and you do not need a special occasion even, they are considered extremely auspicious just in the fact that they are given and if received you should try and pay some debt of with some of the money received, you should always leave a small part of the money inside the ang pow and place in your purse or handbag.

Birthdays

It is traditional and customary to give red envelopes to parents when their baby celebrates his/her first month. In return, parents distribute to well wishers gifts like red dyed eggs (ang nui), yellow rice (nasi kunyit) with curry chicken, bean cakes (ang ku), Money is usually given as birthday gifts for celebrants of all ages. The elderly also distribute gifts of money to the younger generation when they celebrate, for example, their 70th birthday.

Feng Shui

Feng Shui supporters believe that a red envelope containing a gold coin (i-ching coin), can bring good luck to the holder when placed in your purse, wallet, accounts books or handbag. They are also used as wish list holders, you write your dreams and aspirations on a piece of red paper and place inside the red envelope and sit back and wait. Some Feng Shui Practitioners even insist on being paid with their fee inside a red envelope, this is not something that I adhere to though.

School activities:

About six years ago we were contacted by a local primary school who wanted to give all their pupils an Ang Pow red envelope for Chinese New Year, that school and many others have ordered year after year and I personally think that it is a good teacher or parent who gives projects like this as it is good for our children to learn other cultures.

I don't want to make one; I just want to buy them already made:

Oh go on, it can be great fun, I have just spent about five hours writing this article and a further two hours I spent watching my niece Hannah cutting out and colouring her red envelope, it was nice and also lovely to see her enjoying herself and asking questions about them. Actually I have to admit Jo runs a bit of a "sweat shop" here, Hannah regularly helps her out and is one of our cherished team members and this

time of the year (January 2006) is a very busy time for us with the Chinese New Year in a few weeks.

If you really want to buy them follow this link you will find them half way down the page: <http://www.fengshuiweb.co.uk/pages/wealth2.htm>

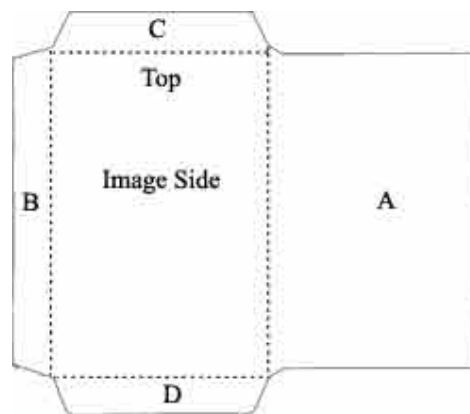
To make your own red envelope you will need:

I have copied below two versions, one you can print straight from your colour printer and the other you can colour in yourself or print onto red paper, this is a nice project to give to children and if you are a school teacher please feel free to print this out and use in your class, all we ask is you do not alter or change any of the text on there.

- A sheet of white paper, red paper or paints/pens for black & white version.
- Scissors
- Pritt glue stick or paper glue.

You should [click here first to download the printer friendly](#) version otherwise you will be printing all our banners and wasting your valuable ink cartridge. Print this onto a sheet of white or red paper, Cut out the red envelope and fold it along the dotted lines as shown below.

Straighten the packet out as shown below, and turn it over so you are looking at the side with the image, as in the diagram below.



Now fold over flap **A** and apply some glue along its right edge. Fold over flap **B** and press it firmly onto the glued edge of flap **A**. Apply a little glue to flap **D** and press it firmly onto flap **B & A**.

You now have your Chinese red envelope! Flap **C** is the top and this is where you should place the money in and then seal it after.

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Colour version



Feng Shui Store
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Black and white version



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