

Red envelopes - Ang Pow, laisee, lai see, red packets, hung bao or Hung-Bao and how to use them in 2015

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Are you *really* prepared for 2015?



Ang Pow red envelopes go by many different names and are most commonly known as “Ang Pow” “red packets” “lai see” “laisee” “hung bao” or “hung-bao”. These red envelopes are seen as extremely auspicious when given as a gift and are seen as even more auspicious when they contain money and can come in all different colours and sizes but are mainly credit card sized and red. The red envelopes main use is for Chinese New Year, birthdays, weddings or any other important event where a gift of money is given.

The image on the front of an Ang Pow is a symbolisation of blessings and good wishes of long life, success and good health to the receiver of the envelope and is a great honour to receive. In modern life, the artists who design the Red Envelopes have found new ways to improve the message of good luck over the years and have incorporated different designs to enhance the meaning such as carps swimming among flowering lotus Lilly, the fabled creatures of Dragon and Phoenix, Chinese zodiac animals relevant for the year the envelopes will be used, peonies displayed in full bloom, the three immortals, golden pineapples, Buddha's and children and many other intricate designs.

All of these Ang Pows bear very stunning artwork and over the years, we have both given and received some truly stunning Ang Pows both from and to friends, clients and family. As a company, we carefully choose every single design that goes on our Red Envelopes that we order as the quality and presentation is very important that is portrayed on the envelopes. We send out Red Envelopes free with every order to clients as our thank you and blessing of good luck; the Red Envelopes that we send contain an Chinese i-ching coins for extra luck in the year of the Goat 2015.

A common Chinese New Year Greeting that awaits any adult visiting a household with children will be: "Gōng Xì Fā Cǎi, Hóng Bāo Ná Lái", this means "Best wishes for the New Year, may I have my Red Envelope please?" It sounds a bit cheeky asking for money this way but it is traditional and acceptable.

When filling your Ang Pow red envelopes you should avoid any amounts with a number 4; so 4 – 24 – 14 etc would be considered bad luck as the number for the Chinese as the pronunciation of four is similar to the character for "death". The number 8 is of course the most auspicious number especially we are in the age of 8. New, crispy notes are best and you should try and avoid wrinkled and old bills and coins. A car number plate in China with the number 8 or multiples of 8 are very valuable.

Red envelopes are also given by companies to their employees as an annual bonus and to their customers to thank them for their business. They really a lovely way to present a gift and also used to pay a Feng Shui Master or consultant.

You will also see red envelopes being "fed" to the Chinese Lion's mouth during the many Lion dances; this is said to bring good luck for the year and is considered a donation for the Lion dancers team who work extremely hard and have to be super fit and healthy.

Whenever you give money to someone on a festive or auspicious occasion like a birthday or something similar, you should never give money in a white envelope you will face the bitterness of the receiver. When a gift of money is received at a gloomy occasion such as a funeral to help cover the costs of a funeral; when this is the case, it is called "Pak Kum" which is when money for the family of the departed is donated. So if you ever come across a Chinese client, please think twice before you hand their fee to them in a white envelope as this could offend them although this is less common in our western countries nowadays.

Common names for Red Envelopes:

In China where Mandarin is the national language, the Red Envelope is known as "hong bao".

Language	Country	Red Envelope
Mandarin	China, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia	<i>hong bao</i>
Cantonese	Hong Kong	<i>lai see</i>
Hokkien	Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia	<i>ang pow (ang bao)</i>

Korean	Korea	<i>Sae Bae Don</i>
Vietnamese	Vietnam	<i>Lì Xì</i>

The term Red Envelope is also commonly known as Red Packet or Red Pocket which are closely related to the *hong bao* or *ang pow* terms.

Red envelope designs

The Red Envelope is usually rectangular in shape and this is thought to have originated from shields which represent protection. The size does vary from the typical small envelope which are sized to have folded bank notes and to fit into an envelope. Also common is the full sized envelope which can fit unfolded notes and is commonly used when giving larger amounts. As a child my brother and I would get so excited and our eyes would immediately go to the size and thickness of the envelope as would give us an idea of how much we may receive, I know this makes me seem shallow but any child would do the same thing.

The two main colours normally used for Red Envelopes are red and gold. Red is almost always the dominant colour of the envelope and is where the term 'Red Envelope' is derived. The colour red symbolises good luck and fortune, but is also used to repel evil spirits and demons and this colour is widely used by the Chinese. Gold is also used as it represents prosperity and wealth which the presenter will wish upon the receiver and hopefully get some back (Karma). We send out free of charge gold envelopes with a single i-ching coin to all our customers as they are considered one of the most auspicious gifts to receive and our way of thanking them for their custom.

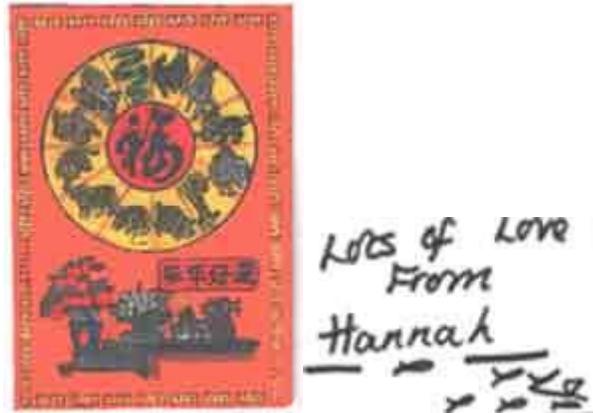
All red envelopes will have an image or Chinese character or both on the front to express a special occasion. I have shown below some meaning and what they symbolise.

Red envelope image	Translation
Fish	Fish always represent wealth and luck and when displayed on an envelope they will be abundance of everything every year.
The Three Immortals (Fuk Luk & Sau)	Fuk, Luk and Sau. Fuk is the deity of wealth and prosperity, Luk symbolizes power and authority, and Sau symbolizes longevity.
Young boy and/or girl	The children are conveying their joy and excitement in receiving

	them.
Phoenix and dragon	Seen on wedding Red Envelopes. Represent Yin and Yang (feminine and masculine) and symbolise blissful relations between husband and wife.
Chinese Zodiac Animals	12 animals based upon 12 lunar year cycle..
Mandarin Citrus Fruit (looks like orange)	In Cantonese, this fruit sounds like 'gold' so symbolizes wealth.
Chinese characters	Translation
Double 'He' (囍)	The double happiness symbol. Mainly used as wedding decoration to represent double happiness.
'Fook' (福)	Good luck and fortunes
'Gong He Fat Choi' (恭喜發財)	Congratulations and Prosperity. Generally means wishing you prosperity and good luck.
'San Nian Fai Lok' (新年快樂)	Happy New Year
'Ya Sui Chin' (壓歲錢)	Money warding off evil spirit

The two tasks below are a great project for people of all ages, especially for children as it can teach them the cultures of surrounding countries and we have had many sent in to us from teachers who had their students do them in school around the time of Chinese New Year. If you are a school teacher, please feel free to download the project template and use it in your classroom and it would be lovely to see some of your students work. You can download the printer friendly version by [clicking this link](#). My cousin Hannah Sacco printed this one below in black and white and then spent a few hours colouring it in.

This is an example of a handmade Ang Pow which started off as the template below and coloured by my then 12 year old cousin Hannah.



The history of the Ang Pow red envelope.

The history of the "ang pow" dates right back to the Sung Dynasty in China. A village called Chang-Chieu was at being terrorised at the time by a huge demon. There was nobody in the village that was able to defeat the demon, not even their greatest warriors or statesmen until a young orphan came along armed with a magical sword which he had inherited from his ancestors and he 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 all from the demon. Since then, the ang pow has become a part of traditional Chinese customs when giving gifts

How much money do you place inside the Ang Pow red envelope?



The amount of money you place in a Red Envelope depends entirely on the situation. If you are giving a red envelope to a child for Chinese New Year, the age of the child will be an important factor and the usual practice is that as you get older, you usually tend to receive a bit more each year. For a 5 year old child, £2 GBP (about \$4 USD) will be fine. The amount contained has to be in even numbers but you must avoid an amount with the number 4. The tradition is to give the Red Envelope during Chinese New Year to children until they are married.

For example:

Two pounds, eight pounds, ten pounds or twenty pounds are all auspicious amounts. I used to get extremely excited as a young child around Chinese New Year as I (Daniel) would earn myself a small fortune in my younger years!

You would be surprised how often we supply red envelopes to people for weddings; if you attend a Chinese or even a Western wedding and decide to make a gift of money, you should place it inside a red envelope for increased luck and wishes of prosperity. The amount that you give to a couple is usually subject to your own financial situation and you should not put in more than you can afford as this can be considered as showing off. This case is very similar with giving Red Envelopes on birthdays although the red packets will usually contain less money as birthdays are not considered as important as weddings.

Giving red packets to employees before the New Year is also a very common practise all around the world these days and this will usually be in the form of a gift or a bonus from the employer. It is also believed that when you present them with your gift, their good fortunes will come back to your company.

The number of coins or notes that are placed in the red envelope may take advantage of the Chinese homophones. For example: you can give a favourable amount ending with eight (8), this 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 and should be avoided. You should always make sure that you give money in even numbers because unlucky numbers are considered as inauspicious, although receiving a single i-ching coin in a red envelope is considered very lucky which is an exception to this rule.

When do you give Ang Pows?

Even though the tradition of giving and receiving red envelopes is centuries old, it is more popular around the world than it has ever been! During Chinese New Year, Ang Pows are given by married couples to small children, teenagers and unmarried adults. This year, Chinese New Year falls on the 19th February 2015.

Red envelopes can be given at any time and do not just have to be given on a special occasion; Red envelopes can even be given to pay fees. Red envelopes are considered very auspicious and can be given at any time of the year; it is recommended that you use some of the money to try and pay some debt off if you have any. You should always leave a small even amount of money inside the red envelope and place it in your purse, handbag or wallet.

A small selection below of the red envelopes that we sell in our store; these really are a work of art and our quality is second to none; the quality is actually very important and the flimsier envelopes can sometimes have a quickly put together pattern that actually has no meaning so please be sure to buy your Red Envelopes from a reputable store.



Birthdays:

It is traditional and customary to give a red envelope to parents when their baby celebrates their first month of life although this is more common in eastern culture. The parents will, in return, distribute to well wishers gifts like red dyed eggs (and nui), yellow rice (nasi kunyit) with curry chicken or bean cakes (ang ku). Money is usually given in an Ang Pow as a birthday gift for people of all age groups. The elderly also give gifts of money to their younger generation when they celebrate events like their 70th birthday for example.

Feng Shui:

Feng Shui enthusiasts believe that a red envelope containing a gold i-ching coin can bring good luck to the bearer of the envelope when it is placed in their purse, wallet, accounts books or handbag. Red envelopes can also be used as wish list holders; you write your dreams and aspirations on a piece of red paper and place it inside the envelope and this is said to encourage your dreams to take place. Some Feng Shui practitioners especially those that practise Tibetan black hat Feng Shui even insist on being paid with their cash fee inside a red envelope, this is not something that I adhere to though, although it is a lovely thought when I do receive it.

School activities:

We were contacted by a local primary school about twelve years ago now by a group of teachers that wanted to give all their students an Ang Pow red envelope for Chinese new year and it is always great to hear that younger generations are becoming involved in different practises. we have many different schools that order large quantities of Ang Pows year after year which I think is lovely that they want to educate their student in other cultures.

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

Believe me, it came be a great activity to do with friends and family. I have just spent about five hours writing this article and a further two hours were spent watching my cousin Hannah cutting out and colouring her red envelope which she kindly gave to me, it was lovely to see her enjoying herself and asking questions about them and I took great pride teaching her all about the Red envelopes history and more. Actually I have to admit Jo in the early days of the Feng Shui Store used to run a bit of a "sweat shop" here, Hannah used to help us out here by placing the I-Ching Coin in the red envelopes and is one of our cherished team members and this time of the year is a very busy time for us with the Chinese New Year in a few weeks.

Whilst we encourage you to make your own but if you really want to buy them, you can follow [this link](#)

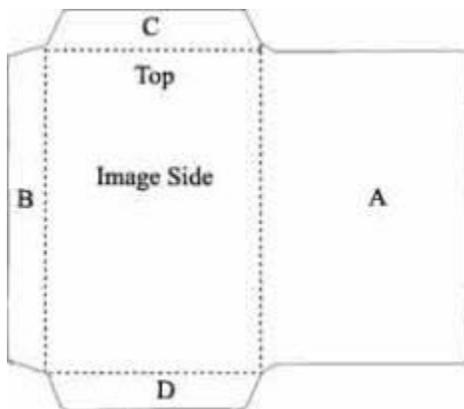
To make your own red envelope you will need:

I have copied two versions below, 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 stick glue 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.

Chinese New Year 2015:

Chinese New Year (according to the lunar calendar) starts on the 19th February 2015 and is celebrated by Chinese all over the world. Chinese New Year denotes new beginnings and a fresh start. This is a time of celebration, reunion, forgiveness, sharing and thanksgiving. This is the date to celebrate the Chinese New Year with Ang Pows, fireworks etc and not the date you use to place your **2015 cures and enhancers** in Feng Shui.

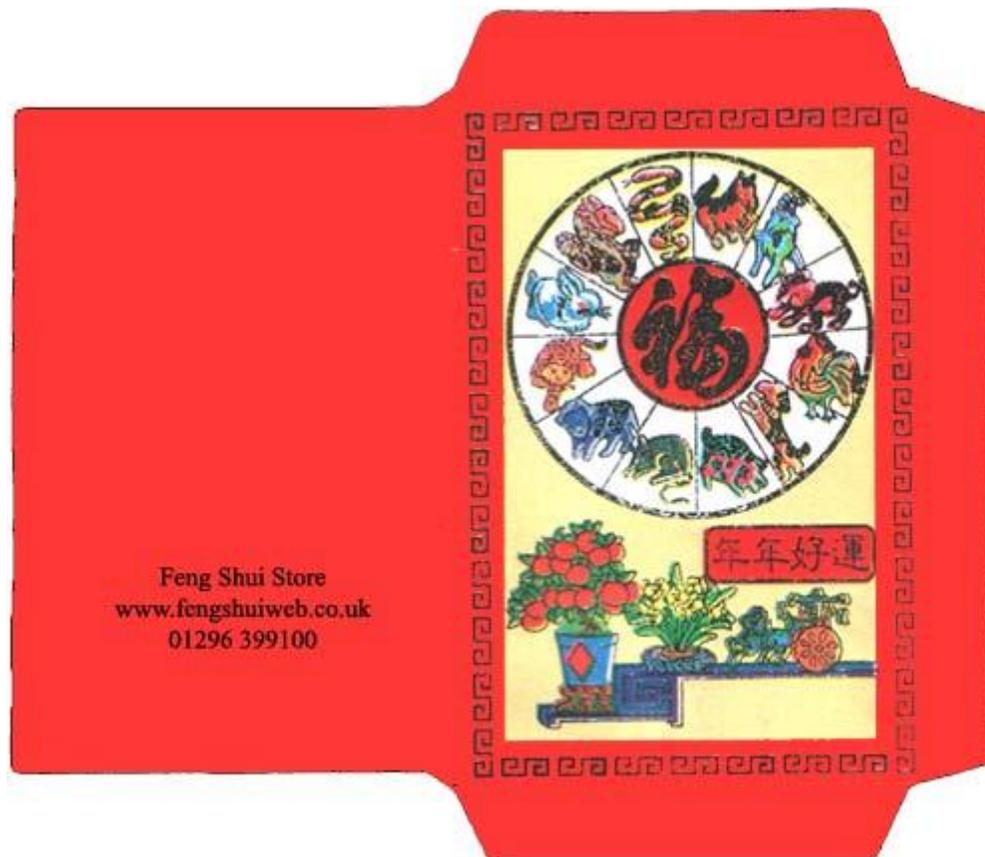
The Lunar Chinese New Year Day is very different from the Solar (Hsia) New Year Day (February 4th 2015). The Lunar Calendar plans the days of the month according to the cycle of the moon whereas the solar year is governed by the sun. Although the Chinese solar year starts on a different date from the western year, the theory whereby the year is calculated on how long it takes the earth to go round the sun is the same. The lunar cycle lasts approximately 29.5 days and in order that the start of the Lunar New Year is not too far removed from the Solar New Year, the Chinese insert an extra month, this being called an intercalary month, once every few years. This is why Chinese New Year Day falls on a different date in each of the two calendars.

Whilst the solar (Hsia) calendar starts the New Year at the beginning of Spring, which falls normally between the 4th and 5th of February, the lunar (yueh) calendar marks the New Year on the second New moon after the winter solstice. In 2015, Lunar Chinese New Year also called the 'Spring Festival', falls on 19th February 2015 which is the New Year that is celebrated by all ethnic Chinese. The solar New Year (4th February 2015) is not celebrated at all and only used for Feng Shui placement.

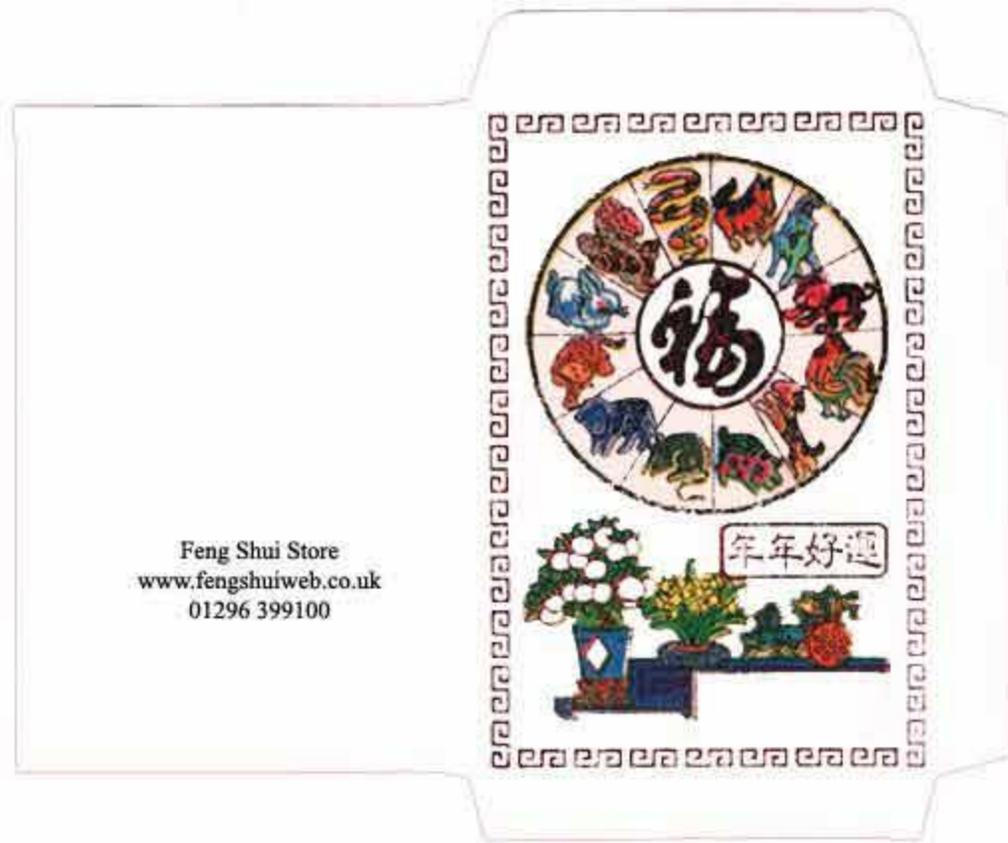
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Visit the pages below for further details on 2015 Chinese New Year etc.

Chinese New Year 2015 ** Checklist for Chinese New Year 2015 ** How to make your own Ang
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Colour version



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Black and white version

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