

# **THE LEGEND OF THE CHINESE ZODIAC**

Thousands of years ago, the Jade Emperor of China organized a race for animals. The first 12 animals to finish were to be given a place in the Zodiac and have a year named after them.

The Cat and the Rat were very close friends. Since they were both late-risers, they asked the Ox to wake them at dawn on the day of the race. The day of the race came. The Ox tried to wake the Cat and the Rat, but they both just kept rolling over and falling back to sleep. The race was about to start. Unwilling to leave them, the Ox coaxed them onto his back and started running. The Rat woke up just as the Ox was crossing the last hurdle, a river.

The clever Rat knew that he could never beat the Cat in the race. He took the chance fate offered to him and pushed the cat off the Ox's back. When the Ox reached the other side, the Rat jumped off and scampered to victory, just ahead of the Ox.

So the 12-year cycle of the Chinese Zodiac begins with the Rat. After him comes the Ox, followed by the Tiger. After them come the Rabbit, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Goat, Monkey, Rooster, Dog and Pig, in that order. The cat, it must be noted, has no place in the zodiac. She wasn't among the first twelve and that is why to this day cats and rats don't get along together.



## **CHARACTER TRAITS OF THE 12 ZODIAC ANIMALS**

**RAT**- Intelligent and quick thinking. Uses these talents to help others. Hard workers.

**OX**- Dependable and trustworthy. Make good leaders. Loyal to friends and good listeners.

**TIGER**- Courageous and strong. Stand up for their friends. Warm and honest.

**RABBIT**- Gentle and compassionate. Creative and make good decisions. Strong socially.

**DRAGON**- Confident and passionate. Strive for excellence. Generous towards others

**SNAKE**- Good communicator and courteous. Make good decisions. Like to help others

**HORSE**- Resourceful, enthusiastic, and energetic. Work at self-improvement. Lead groups well.

**GOAT**- Artistic and good natured. Good team players. Offer support to help group success.

**MONKEY**- Good problem solvers with many talents. Adaptable and humorous. Gets along well with others.

**ROOSTER**- Observant and resourceful. Good at keeping others organized. Persistent personal achievers.

**DOG**- Friendly and faithful. Strong empathy towards others. Finish things they start.

**PIG**- Generous and supportive. Gives to others first. Practical and thinks things through.

## **2024: THE YEAR OF THE DRAGON**

Each animal of the Chinese New Year has certain characteristics. The Dragon is the only mythical creature in the zodiac and is a symbol of excellence, honor, and success. They are adventurous and have the confidence to pursue their dreams and goals. Most importantly, the Dragon looks out for others and seeks to find the win-win in every situation. The Year of the Dragon is said to foster growth, progress, and abundance and is a good year to build a foundation of excellence.

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# WHAT WE LEARNED TODAY



The Shaolin Martial Arts and the Chinese zodiac have some common animals. In the martial arts, these animals teach us movements and mindsets to help us with everyday life. Try using the animal exercises to improve your focus and interactions in school.

## ***BELLY BREATHING***

Belly breathing has many benefits. It can help you focus, keep you calm, and increase your confidence. In each of the exercises we practiced, use your belly breathing to make them more effective.

### **Key Points to Remember**

- Breathe in through the nose and make the belly get big.
- Breathe out through the mouth and squeeze the belly in.
- Breathing should be as quiet as possible.

## ***DRAGON RIDES THE WIND - Calm the Mind***

The wise dragon knows how to stay calm under pressure. Use dragon breath when you feel nervous, upset, or just need to take a moment before facing a challenging situation.

### **Key Points to Remember**

- Inhale and press your hands up with your palms touching.
- Turn your hands out and spread your wings as you exhale.
- Relax your hands at your sides or on your desk as you focus your eyes.

## ***TIGER REACHES FOR SKY - Calm the Body***

The powerful tiger can stay still for a long time and wait patiently. When the tiger needs a break, it stretches for a moment, then settles back and becomes still again. If you are having trouble staying still, stretch like the tiger to calm your body.

### **Key Points to Remember**

- Make your hands into claws with your palms facing up.
- Exhale and push your palms straight up, stretching your spine.
- Inhale and relax your hands to the starting position.

## ***SNAKE SEEKS STILLNESS - Concentrate and Focus***

The mindful snake focuses intensely on one thing. Its supple body may move, but its eyes remain fixed on what it should be paying attention to. Use the focus of the snake to stay on task and avoid distractions.

### **Key Points to Remember**

- Use belly breathing slowly and rhythmically.
- Keep your eyes and your mind focused on the teacher or your work.
- Hold your body still, but not stiff; be supple like the snake.

## ***MONKEY LAUGHS IN THE TREES - Spreading Smiles***

The monkey is full of laughter and is always ready to share a smile. By genuinely trying to make others happy, the clever monkey makes good choices and is well liked by others. Experience the contagiousness of smiles simply by smiling at those around you. Pay attention to how you feel when someone returns a smile back to you.

### **Key Points to Remember**

- Try to make your partner smile only by smiling at them
- You can't touch them or do anything too crazy, only smiling
- Pay attention to what happens after the "game" is finished

