

Classroom Resources — Free on This Site

Every resource below is free on ChineseZodiac.com — print it or project it, no login needed.

REFERENCE

Zodiac Year Chart (1924-2031)

Have students look up the animal for their own birth year.

chinesezodiac.com/years

REFERENCE

Zodiac Calculator

Instant birth-date zodiac lookup.

chinesezodiac.com/calculator

PRINTABLE

Animal Flashcard Set

Picture cards to pair with the matching exercise.

chinesezodiac.com/printables/flashcards

English	中文	Pinyin	Notes
Zodiac	生肖	shēngxiào	The Chinese zodiac; the set of twelve animal signs.
Rat	鼠	shǔ	First animal in the zodiac cycle.
Ox	牛	niú	Symbol of diligence and steady strength.
Tiger	虎	hǔ	Associated with bravery and confidence.
Rabbit	兔	tù	Linked to gentleness and good fortune.
Dragon	龙	lóng	The only mythical animal; a sign of power and luck.
Snake	蛇	shé	Connected with wisdom and calm.

English	中文	Pinyin	Notes
Horse	马	mǎ	Represents energy and freedom.
Goat	羊	yáng	The character 羊 can mean goat or sheep.
Monkey	猴	hóu	Known for cleverness and curiosity.
Rooster	鸡	jī	The character 鸡 covers chicken and rooster.
Dog	狗	gǒu	A sign of loyalty and honesty.
Pig	猪	zhū	Twelfth and last animal in the cycle.
Year	年	nián	Used in phrases like "Year of the Tiger."
Animal	动物	dòngwù	The general word for an animal.
I was born in the year of...	我属	wǒ shǔ	Literally "I belong to," used to give your zodiac sign. Note: here 属 (shǔ) means "to belong to," a different word from 鼠 (shǔ, rat).

Bilingual Reading Passage

The Chinese zodiac, or shēngxiào (生肖), is a cycle of twelve animals. The order always begins with the Rat (鼠) and ends with the Pig (猪).

Each year (年, nián) belongs to one animal. A baby born this year might be a little Dragon (龙) or a little Rabbit (兔). After twelve years, the cycle starts again with the Rat.

In Chinese, you can say which sign you are with the phrase wǒ shǔ (我属), which means "I belong to." For example, someone born in a horse year would say they belong to the Horse (马).

People often connect each animal with a trait. The Ox (牛) is known for hard work, the Tiger (虎) for bravery, and the Dog (狗) for loyalty. These are just for fun and storytelling, but they make the

zodiac easy to remember and enjoy.

Practice Exercises

Exercise 1: Match the Animal

Match each Chinese character to the correct English animal.

1. 龙 a. Rabbit
2. 马 b. Pig
3. 兔 c. Dragon
4. 猪 d. Horse

Exercise 2: Fill in the Blank

Write the missing pinyin (with tone marks) for each animal.

1. Rat = 鼠 = _____
2. Tiger = 虎 = _____
3. Snake = 蛇 = _____
4. Dog = 狗 = _____

Exercise 3: Speaking Practice

Practice saying these out loud with a partner. Try to use the correct tones.

Say the twelve animals in order, from 鼠 (shǔ) to 猪 (zhū).

Tell your partner your own sign using "wǒ shǔ..." plus your animal.

Point to a classmate and ask which animal they think they are.

Answer Key

Exercise 1: 1-c (龙 = Dragon), 2-d (马 = Horse), 3-a (兔 = Rabbit), 4-b (猪 = Pig).

Exercise 2: 1. shǔ, 2. hǔ, 3. shé, 4. gǒu.

Exercise 3: Answers will vary; check for correct animal names and a clear attempt at tones.

Cultural Notes

- Your zodiac animal is set by the year you are born, not the month, so everyone born in the same lunar year shares the same sign.

- The lunar new year usually falls in late January or February, so a person born in early January may belong to the previous year's animal. Always check the exact lunar date for a birthday near the new year.
- The same twelve animals appear across many East and Southeast Asian cultures, though a few cultures swap one animal (for example, some traditions use the Cat in place of the Rabbit).
- Asking someone their zodiac sign is a polite, friendly way to guess their age without asking the year directly, since each sign repeats every twelve years.

How to use this in class: Start with the vocabulary table and have students match each English animal to its character and practice saying the pinyin aloud with correct tones. Read the passage together, then work through the exercises and check answers with the key. As a follow-up, ask each student to find the animal for their own birth year and say it in Chinese.

Vocabulary verified against standard Chinese references. We welcome corrections from native speakers and educators — please get in touch if you spot anything to improve.