

# The Traditional Chinese Calendar

The Traditional Chinese calendar does not count years in an infinite sequence. Instead, years have names that are repeated in a 60 year cycle. Historically, years used to be counted since the accession of an emperor, but this was abolished after the 1911 revolution. Our current 60-year cycle began on 2nd February 1984.

**Note:** Most traditional calligraphers only use the name of a year plus their own names as their signature. However, the season is often included.

## Heavenly or Celestial Stem

- |           |           |
|-----------|-----------|
| 1. 甲 jiǎ  | 6. 己 jǐ   |
| 2. 乙 yǐ   | 7. 庚 gēng |
| 3. 丙 bǐng | 8. 辛 xīn  |
| 4. 丁 dīng | 9. 壬 rén  |
| 5. 戊 wù   | 10. 癸 guǐ |

Within each 60-year cycle, each year is assigned a name consisting of two components which are used sequentially. These words have no English equivalent.

The first component is the *Heavenly* or *Celestial Stem*.

The second component is the *Earthly* or *Terrestrial Branch*. The names and characters of the 12 corresponding zodiac animals in the cycle are given in brackets below.

Thus, the 1st year of the 60-year cycle is jiǎ-zǐ 甲子, the 2nd year is yǐ-chǒu 乙丑, the 3rd year is bǐng-yín 丙寅, and so on.

## Terrestrial or Earthly Branch

- |                           |                          |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. 子 zǐ (rat 鼠)           | 7. 午 wǔ (horse 馬)        |
| 2. 丑 chǒu (ox 牛)          | 8. 未 wèi (sheep, goat 羊) |
| 3. 寅 yín (tiger 虎)        | 9. 申 shēn (monkey 猴)     |
| 4. 卯 mǎo (hare, rabbit 兔) | 10. 酉 yǒu (rooster 雞)    |
| 5. 辰 chén (dragon 龍)      | 11. 戌 xū (dog 狗)         |
| 6. 巳 sì (snake 蛇)         | 12. 亥 hài (pig, boar 豬)  |

When the end of a component is reached, it begins once again from the beginning: The 10th year is guǐ-yǒu 癸酉, therefore, the 11th year is jiǎ-xū 甲戌 (restarting the Celestial Stem), the 12th year is yǐ-hài 乙亥, and the 13th year is bǐng-zǐ 丙子 (restarting the Terrestrial Branch). Finally, the 60th year is guǐ-hài 癸亥.

## 2020 onward

Year	Year: Simple Chinese	Celestial Stem: Position char (pinyin)	Terrestrial Branch: Position char (pinyin)	Year: Chars (pinyin)
2020	二〇二〇	7. 庚 (gēng)	1. 子 (zǐ)	庚子 (gēng zǐ)
2021	二〇二一	8. 辛 (xīn)	2. 丑 (chǒu)	辛丑 (xīn chǒu)
2022	二〇二二	9. 壬 (rén)	3. 寅 (yín)	壬寅 (rén yín)
2023	二〇二三	10. 癸 (guǐ)	4. 卯 (mǎo)	癸卯 (guǐ mǎo)
2024	二〇二四	1. 甲 (jiǎ)	5. 辰 (chén)	甲辰 (jiǎ chén)
2025	二〇二五	2. 乙 (yǐ)	6. 巳 (sì)	乙巳 (yǐ sì)
2026	二〇二六	3. 丙 (bǐng)	7. 午 (wǔ)	丙午 (bǐng wǔ)
2027	二〇二七	4. 丁 (dīng)	8. 未 (wèi)	丁未 (dīng wèi)
2028	二〇二八	5. 戊 (wù)	9. 申 (shēn)	戊申 (wù shēn)
2029	二〇二九	6. 己 (jǐ)	10. 酉 (yǒu)	己酉 (jǐ yǒu)
2030	二〇三〇	7. 庚 (gēng)	11. 戌 (xū)	庚戌 (gēng xū)
2031	二〇三一	8. 辛 (xīn)	12. 亥 (hài)	辛亥 (xīn hài)
2032	二〇三二	9. 壬 (rén)	1. 子 (zǐ)	壬子 (rén zǐ)