

# 新年好

## What is the truth behind Chinese New Year Superstitions?

Chinese New Year is a time when age-old superstitions are observed by households as festive customs and traditions. Superstitions add colour and flavour to the festive celebrations. However, have you ever wondered about the significance of these superstitions and myths? Or tried to research how these superstitions originated in the first place? Here are some superstitions:

### No cleaning please!

Cleaning on New Year's Day will sweep away luck, so clean the house thoroughly before the New Year (this also sweeps away bad luck from the last year). Garbage and dust shouldn't be carried through the front door, as it may result in death or estrangement of a family member.



### Watch your tongue!

No ghost stories, no foul language and certainly no unlucky words on New Year's Eve, because it sets a precedent for the rest of the year.



### Don't buy books!

Buying books is a no-no because the word 'Book' is a homonym for "lose" in Cantonese. Reading however, is permitted.



### Hold the tears!

Never cry on New Year's Eve. This is good news for children because they are spared punishments on the first day.



### Hold that wash!

Wash your hair on the first day and good luck will be washed away.



### Give shoes a miss!

Shoe shopping is also restricted on the first day because "shoes" is a homonym for "rough" in Cantonese.



### Not in the bedroom, please!

It is unlucky to greet anyone in their bedroom. This is why everyone, even the sick, should be dressed and seated in the living room.



### Cut it out!

Handling sharp objects on the first day may cut off good fortune. Put away knives and scissors the previous day.



### Red is the colour!

Bright red clothes, ornaments, and home decorations such as couplets with themes of good fortune and happiness are essential. Children receive crisp currency notes in little red envelopes (hong baos) for good fortune.



### Make the luck count!

The first person you greet determines your luck in the New Year. It is also a lucky sign to see or hear songbirds, red-coloured birds or swallows.



While these superstitions do not seem to have basis in concrete facts, they have been explored by many scholars and you can actually verify your information on these superstitions with credible sources.

Well-documented and thoroughly researched newspaper articles can be great sources of information for local and cultural topics. NLB's [NewspaperSG](http://www.newspapers.nl.sg) ([www.newspapers.nl.sg](http://www.newspapers.nl.sg)) is one reliable source that you may want to consult when you want to look for interviews and articles.

For example:  
Manual on Chinese customs proposed. (1987, September 19). The Straits Times, p. 12.  
Campbell, Sandra. (1988, February 14). Lunar New Year — it's more than just hongbao. The Straits Times, p. 3.  
With the old. (2007, February 01). Today, p. 66.