



Year of the White Rat 2020

January 25, 2020 is the start of the Chinese Year of the White Rat (or Mouse). The Rat is the first animal in the Chinese Zodiac system and this is the beginning of a completely new 12-year and 60-year cycle and is therefore considered the beginning of a new era. It is also the start of another decade, all of which makes it an especially important year for new beginnings and new possibilities. It is time to bring out new ideas, new plans and say yes to new opportunities. It is a good year for reinvention and starting over.

Rats are considered mostly positive animals to the Chinese and are appreciated for their cleverness and the ability to always find food. People born in the Year of the Rat are considered charming, adaptable, witty and sociable. Rats favor their young, so this is a year of youth empowerment and reclaiming one's youthful self. People will feel younger and livelier. According to the legend, the Rat tricked the Ox into giving him a ride, jumping off right before the finish line to come in first. The energies of this year will no doubt inspire some of the tricksters and opportunists in society, so be wary of anything that sounds too good to be true!

This is a Yang Water Year with Yang Metal on top. These two elements are considered compatible and harmonious, as the Metal Element feeds the Water Element in the Parent - Child cycle of the Five Elements. This means that there is the potential for a peaceable year. However, there is an underlying, hidden aggression that these two powerful Yang elements bring to the year that should not be ignored and may emerge if provoked.

Yang Metal is symbolic of the sword and military might. The Chinese believe that it requires many years of training to yield a sword properly and that a warrior must have the correct mental orientation to wield it judiciously. Expect to see a renewed emphasis from military and political leaders about important Metal values such as: honor; courage; duty; respect; service; loyalty and commitment. These ideals will be valued and appreciated in society as well. Having Yang Metal in the Rat Year indicates that there may be a gathering of troops in new places or the movement of troops, as the seeds of future conflict will likely be planted in the coming year.

Forging a sword is a difficult process requiring the use of fire - the forge, where metal is heated and hammered multiple times until it becomes the right shape. Then grinding, hardening, quenching and tempering are done repeatedly until a formidable weapon is formed with very sharp edges. Applying this metaphor to people, it means that those who have suffered in the past will see rewards for the character building they went through and the strength achieved from their previous pain and hardship. Those people who are willing to stand upright or "stand in the light of their own truth" without fear of

repercussion will be particularly respected and will shine. People who embody the strength of self that comes from overcoming obstacles and are resilient will emerge as heroes or social icons and gain large followings. They will be admired and appreciated for their resilience and integrity. Some will no doubt be athletes, as it is an Olympic year.

Yang Water is represented by the ocean, or large water, which also includes large lakes and large rivers. There is tremendous power in water this year and it is expected that there will be major flooding events caused by high tides, rising sea levels or larger than normal waves. Be prepared for saltwater intrusion into fresh water. Low lying coastal areas, particularly cities on the coast, will be very vulnerable to the flooding that comes from storm surges, possible tsunamis from large earthquakes, or from icebergs calving. There will be blizzards and rain events are likely to be deluges. It is anticipated that there will be more atmospheric rivers and large snow events will cause avalanches. Major rivers will also likely overflow their banks or lakes will rise, particularly near cities and flood expensive homes. Have your sandbags ready!

Yang Metal is the autumn and Yang Water is winter. This combination forecasts some very strong storms in these seasons. There will be extreme cold in many places; some that will be unused to such low, freezing temperatures. Because Metal and Water push into Wood in the Five Element Cycle, which in weather is Wind, you can expect some major windstorms, especially in the fall and this will also drive small water, which is rain and snow, making all the usual storms involving wind and water more Yang and therefore more dangerous. This will undoubtedly cause plane and car crashes due to the effects of severe weather conditions.

The strength in Water could also forecast some big social changes. There may be uprisings of like-minded people over important causes, like the start of the Civil Rights movement in the U.S. 60 years ago. Or there may be massive shifts in public opinion or in politics that ushers in a new, surprising leader, like John F. Kennedy, who was elected in the U.S. in 1960. You can expect to see large, primarily non-violent protests across countries, many of which are a continuation of last year's protests. Violence is only forecast if the military gets involved in breaking up these demonstrations. These demonstrations will show governments how they can correct the course of their previously repressive and unfair policies.

You may see long-term politicians being voted out of office and replaced with younger, less conservative candidates. New ideas will spread like a tide across countries and previously separated people will come back together. My Chinese family has a saying that "all rivers will become one ocean," and this is an appropriate truism for this year when all kinds of people will come together to create waves of change.

Many people will have become dismayed and even disgusted by the bad behavior of politicians and celebrities in the previous years. Many have become fed up with rude and crude behavior. There will be a call to return to more Metallic ideals of behavior and this year. People will want to lead by example, showing more civility, politeness and displaying manners again.

People will also demand more ethical business practices and will want people and businesses to uphold important values, act appropriately and take responsibility for their actions. There will be a strong desire to root out corruption and reward those companies that act ethically. Hypocrisy will not be tolerated this year and it may actually be dangerous this year for public figures to compromise their principles.

Unfortunately, this will also lead to many people proselytizing about morals, which will show up as rigidity that can feel oppressive and even argumentative, as they will be quite sure that they are right. However, the Metal Element is more about a code of virtuous behavior that is individual and will manifest as behaving with decency and moral courage. When people embody and live by their own values, they will attract others who believe and act in similar ways. Those who “take the high road” this year will be admired and rewarded.

However, in contrast to the more serious Metallic aspect of the year, the Rat brings vitality into popular culture and there will be a sense of youthfulness that has not been seen or felt in many years. Peach Blossom Luck, a Chinese term for charisma and charm will be abundant this year. These flowers, like Cherry Blossoms, are a symbol of renewal – the promise of spring after a long hard winter. It will manifest in people as a joie de vivre, lightness of spirit and in playfulness. Peach Luck will make people feel more flirtatious and it is a very good year for having more sex. Rats are also known for having lots of babies, so you will see an increase in pregnancies and multiple births, especially in families that already have children.

People will want to refine their image and dress in classic styles, or they will want to dress in more youthful styles, or in bohemian styles with flowing ethnic prints. Knit fabrics, silk and iridescent fabrics will also be valued. The colors of the year will be dark colors, primarily blue, blue-green or black for Water and the Metal colors of white, grey and pastels. Precious metal jewelry made of Gold and Platinum will be more popular and Pearls will become fashionable again. Beaded necklaces made by craftspeople from indigenous cultures will also be trendy.

Because White Rats are lab animals, you can expect to see a renewed interest and respect for science, especially involving laboratories. New discoveries are likely about both space and the deep sea. Allopathic Medicine is a metallic profession and there will be medical breakthroughs, especially involving pharmaceuticals. This is a good year for surgery, as the Metal Element enhances precision and there will be fewer medical mistakes. Acupuncture, which uses metal needles, is another profession that will see gains in the number of patients and gain popularity for more conditions. Natural and Ancient remedies of all kinds, especially from foreign countries can enhance healing and many Old Wives’ tales may be validated scientifically. The Water Element also adds strength to the fields of Psychology, Psychiatry and Philosophy and experts and the information these professionals present will be seen as valuable. People will want to go deep into their own psyches this year and they will be more willing to go into therapy.

Water is an element that wants clarity and therefore truth, so past deceptions and secrets will continue to rise up to be seen and deep personal process work can be

accomplished. Another interesting metaphor of 2020 implies that people will be able to “see” better and will have more clarity about what is true, especially regarding the past. This may also be literal, where vision improves in those who have vision problems.

The Year of the Rat is a very good year for improving health. People will feel more vital, alive and awake. Minor health issues can clear up easily and more serious or chronic illnesses can stabilize, as Yang Metal enhances the immune system and the Lungs. When people do get sick this year, they can recover quicker and easier. People will also heal from broken bones faster due to the strength of the Water Element.

People will want to take charge of their own health and there will be a renewed focus on a healthier lifestyle, as the Metal Element increases the dedication to self-improvement. The Yang aspects of this year will make people want to exercise more in a natural way. Swimming, especially in saltwater pools or directly in the ocean is recommended and spending time in and around water will be very healing. Sleeping more is also recommended and insomnia should improve this year.

There may be problems with edema, i.e., water retention, this year, especially in the lungs. And people who are prone to blood thinning will have to watch for excessive bleeding and those with weak hearts may find their condition exacerbated by the lack of fire in this year. However, many people with Kidney or Lung diseases will be given respite, as these organs will be stronger overall this year.

The cold weather, wind and the viruses of the fall and winter seasons will lead to cold conditions in Chinese Medicine, like circulation problems in the extremities, arthritis and tightness in the neck and shoulders from Wind-Cold. This may also lead to bouts of dizziness and heart palpitations. Remedies involve warming the body, like taking baths or soaking your feet are good, and remember to wear gloves, hats and scarves. And this is a particularly good year for drinking hot beverages like Tea with Lemon and Honey and for taking distilled spirits medicinally, as in Hot Toddys or Hot Buttered Rum, or pouring Brandy into your Coffee. Chicken Broth, Bone Broth and Vegetable Broths are also good for enhancing the immune system.

The Earth Element is weak this year and unfortunately this may mean that some areas of the world will experience famine or food insecurity due to crop failures and weather related problems, such as flooding of fields. However, the Metal Element involves technology and this may help get food distributed when needed and even before it is needed, as computer modeling may be able to forecast the needs ahead of time.

This may also indicate that there will be problems with digestion for many people, especially with an increase in food intolerances. The Metal Element requires simple, fresh food and the savory and pungent flavors will be more popular than sweet. Ethnic food and recipes that have been handed down in families will also be more appreciated. Diets this year will be more omnivorous and flexitarian, due to the Rat energy and there will be a renewed interest in foraging. It is advised that people eat more warm food and cooked foods this year and foods that are easy to eat and digest. This includes soup, stews, yogurt, steamed foods and pureed foods.

Fire is still hidden underground, as mentioned earlier and will continue to cause earthquakes and volcanic eruption and fires that burn out of control as fire fights fire and there simply isn't enough fire this year. It also means there will be power outages from storms. The Stock Market is expected to be a bit sluggish in terms of gains and less reactive to market pressures. People will be feeling less optimistic about the economy and may want to revert to safer and more secure investments. There will be a slow-down in economic growth for the next several years until the Fire Element reemerges in 2025.

The good news is that the Water Element is good for international trade between powerful countries and trading blocs. There will be more agreement between states, provinces and united countries, such as the EU. Organizations involving member nations will also return to power due to the strength of the Water Element, which enhances merging. So company mergers will also be given extra luck this year for succeeding. It is a good year for startups and for new ventures, especially in the technology sector and for getting a steady job. It is also a good year for accumulating personal wealth, especially if you are an Ox, Dragon or Monkey or have one of those animals in your Four Pillars.

The Power of the Ocean makes it a precarious place to be, so expect problems with cargo ships, cruise ships and luxury yachts. It will be easier to capsize, be hit with rogue waves, or to take on water. It will also be easy to be swept off piers, bridges and breakwaters, so use extra caution around the sea. However, deep-sea exploration will be benefitted by the energies of the year, with discoveries of ancient shipwrecks and possibly finding new species in the depths of the ocean.

Important studies about climate change will emerge and will be taken more seriously, as the sky and space are part of the Metal Element. Any manufacturing involving Metal is benefitted this year. This includes the auto industry, the airplane industry, the steel industry and even the mining industry when it involves mining for metals. And products that involve distillation, like liquor, or vinegar, or flower essences, or tinctures to chemicals, or water will flourish in both production and sales. It is also a good year for the high tech industry.

The action of the Water Element is willfulness. It will be hard to talk people out of what they want to do. They will also be more stubborn and intractable once they have made up their mind. Only fear will move these people, as fear is the emotion associated with the Water Element and the Kidneys. People will also want to have stronger boundaries in interpersonal relationships and will feel more independent, due to the strength of Metal. There is a strong desire for personal freedom, equality and fairness. People will feel the urge to be involved in social advocacy and this may manifest as the upwelling of renewed social movements and the desire to change the established order. Many revolutions had their start in a Rat Year. The Metal Element also adds the discriminating power of the intellect that will be activated in people. People will become more skeptical and less likely to follow others, preferring their own counsel about what they should think or how they should act.

Many people will need to check an enhanced need for perfection this year, but will probably enjoy creating more order and beauty in their lives and in their personal

environments. People will want to collect more ethnic artifacts, due to the Water Element and will want to buy quality, luxury items because of the Metal Element. It is recommended that people buy fresh flowers this year and to burn candles to enhance the Fire Element in their homes and offices. It is a good year for Feng Shui practitioners and for interior designers. The Water Element is about the upwelling of creativity so all creative people will be increasingly inspired. This will especially apply to writing, music, art, photography and graphic design. Refinement will be appreciated in the arts.

Many people will feel their ambition rise this year. But a realistic and somewhat skeptical appraisal of the steps necessary to accomplish goals will also be needed, as luck will be gained through discipline and consistency. This is also a good year for Higher Education and for people who hold advanced degrees. Significant life experience will also be more appreciated and the stories from elderly/older people will help younger people see the cycles within history. This will help alleviate some of the anxiety and stress of the last few years when events are seen in a bigger context. Wisdom will be much more appreciated and honored this year. Clairvoyance will also be enhanced this year and many people will gain insight through their dreams and in meditation.

There is an interesting dichotomy in the social aspect of this year. People may find themselves vacillating between being alone due to the Metal Element and to sometimes feeling too close to others from the Water Element. There will also be a desire to find time to think deeply about things and then a desire to share those thoughts with people that you trust. The Rat is a sociable creature, so be sure to make time for some enjoyable gatherings.

Overall it will be a very dynamic year. Mother Nature will be in charge and she will be temperamental, so be prepared by stocking emergency supplies in your homes, offices and cars and stay warm when the storms come. Luckily, many people will experience enhanced health and vitality and the winds of change will be blowing, altering the status quo for years to come!

Individual Animal Forecasts for 2020

Rat* - Water Element: 1924, 1936, 1948, 1960, 1972, 1984, 1996, 2008, 2020

This is a somewhat stressful year, less so for those turning 60. This is a good year for moving, changing jobs and for starting new projects. Rats will have to work hard but try to save money, as you will spend it easily.

Ox - Earth Element: 1925, 1937, 1949, 1961, 1973, 1985, 1997, 2009 and 2021

This is a lucky year, especially for making a return on previous investments of all kinds. Health problems clear up and there is renewed energy and motivation. Oxes will be feeling much more optimistic.

Tiger - Wood Element: 1926, 1938, 1950, 1962, 1974, 1986, 1998, 2010, 2022

This is a year where there will be financial worries, but it is a very good year for socializing. Tigers have a chance of becoming known for their special talents and this will lead to future rewards.

Rabbit* - Wood Element: 1927, 1939, 1951, 1963, 1975, 1987, 1999, 2011, 2023

This is not an easy year for Rabbits as they will feel more tired than usual and will need to take good care of their health. There will be more unexpected expenses, but this is a good year for investing.

Dragon - Earth Element: 1928, 1940, 1952, 1964, 1976, 1988, 2000, 2012, 2024

This is an outstanding year with lots of opportunity available. Dragons will feel healthier and more energized. They can accomplish a lot, especially with new ventures in business and there is luck in romance.

Snake - Fire Element: 1929, 1941, 1953, 1965, 1977, 1989, 2001, 2013, 2025

This is a stable and calm year for Snakes. Progress can be made in business and finance and debts can be cleared or lessened. It is a good year for making plans and preparing for the future.

Horse* - Fire Element: 1930, 1942, 1954, 1966, 1978, 1990, 2002, 2014, 2026

This is a somewhat difficult year for Horses, as there will be extra expenses and they will feel less energetic than usual. They will find themselves feeling a bit more short-tempered and need to think before they speak.

Sheep - Earth Element: 1931, 1943, 1955, 1967, 1979, 1991, 2003, 2015, 2027

This is supposed to be a restful year for Sheep and they need to spend time recuperating and recharging. However, there will be steady progress in business and making money and relationships are harmonious.

Monkey - Metal Element: 1932, 1944, 1956, 1968, 1980, 1992, 2004, 2016, 2028

This is an excellent year for Monkeys. They will be more creative and inventive. Business will expand, along with income; relationships are happy; and they will feel healthy and energetic.

Rooster - Metal Element: 1933, 1945, 1957, 1969, 1981, 1993, 2005, 2017, 2029

Roosters will want to retreat this year, as the energies will feel chaotic to them. They will be more reserved emotionally, but they will be more creative. There may be some hidden or surprising expenses.

Dog - Earth Element: 1934, 1946, 1958, 1970, 1982, 1994, 2006, 2018, 2030

This is an exciting year for Dogs and they will need to remember to rest. They will want to expand their business and will talk more about their dreams, but need to take things slower than they want to go.

Pig - Water Element: 1935, 1947, 1959, 1971, 1983, 1995, 2007, 2019, 2031

This is a somewhat uncomfortable year for Pigs, as they will experience more change than they like. But it is a good chance for them to re-organize, rediscover and restart things, if they can overcome their resistance.

*Rats, Rabbits and Horses will find this year to be more difficult, so they should carry an Ox charm for protection to bring more luck their way. But remember that this only means that they may have to: work harder; move; travel more; change jobs; start a new job; get married; or have a baby – the Chinese call it experiencing “Good Bad Luck.”

A special thank you to Gray Estrada and Kelly Harrington for their contributions to the forecast, based on their knowledge of the Five Elements.

For a list of lucky foods to eat to celebrate the Chinese New Year, please check out my blog: <https://5elementfood.blogspot.com/p/chinese-new-years-food.html>

And, if you would like to know how to make many of these foods that are also Gluten, Lactose, Seafood, Nut, Dye and MSG Free, my new cookbook, **Divine Chinese Cuisine**, written with my son Stephen Leseferko, is now available to preorder: <https://lotusinstitute.com/pages/bookstore>



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