

Chinese Lucky Red Envelopes

Background:

Traditionally, on Chinese New Year, Chinese people give red envelopes known as 紅包, *hóngbāo* in Mandarin and 利市, *lai see* in Cantonese, to friends, young children and family. These red envelopes are also given at family occasions such as weddings or holidays such as Chinese New Year. The red color of the envelope symbolizes good luck, while the gold characters on the envelope usually represent happiness and wealth.

The red envelope is always given with money inside it and the amount of money can be large or small, but according to Chinese beliefs the amount given always has to be an even number, since odd-numbered amounts are given at funerals. It is also believed that the amount of money given should not be in fours or contain the number four because the pronunciation of the word “four” resembles that of the word “death” signifying bad luck for the Chinese. The amount of money is not given folded, dirty, or wrinkled because it shows bad taste, so the money is usually given in new crisp bills. When giving someone a red envelope, it is necessary to present the envelope to the recipient with both hands and also to receive the envelope with both hands.

Directions:

1. Cut out a red envelope along the solid lines.
2. Fold along the dotted lines.
3. Glue the envelope sides along the two sections that say “paste”.
4. Go to the next table where you can write a message on the front of your envelope!