

Chinese Paper Cutout Activity / All Ages Inspired by Chinese Lunar New Year

Chinese paper cutting or *jiǎnzhǐ* 剪纸 is a traditional folk art form used in many festivities in China, especially during the Chinese Lunar New Year. Paper, was invented by Cai Lun in about 105.

Archeological evidence from the 500s indicates that women pasted cut gold and silver foil cuttings in their hair, and men used them in temple rituals. Later cut paper began to be used during festivals to decorate gateways and windows.

As paper became a widely popular material, the art of paper cutting grew into one of the most important types of Chinese folk art. During the New Year, cut paper, also known as cut-outs, are often used to decorate doors and windows. Families usually glue cut-out paper to the exterior of windows. The light from the inside the homes, shines through cut-out figures in the windows, illuminating the space outside like a lantern. Red paper is often used for the cut-outs. In Chinese culture, the color red is often associated with happiness.

Chinese cutouts often include many popular characters of the New Year. One of the most known, called *fú* (福), is often placed above doorways during celebrations, so that “good fortune” can bless all who pass through. *fú* (福), which means good fortune, is an indispensable character for every Chinese family’s New Year decoration. Sometimes the character *fú* (福) is hung upside down above the door so that happiness can pour out on all that pass through the doorway. Inspired by the Chinese lunar year traditions, we will create our own version of paper cut-outs and good luck charms. Let’s welcome the New Year, calling for good fortune and blessings!

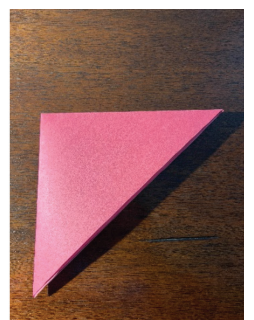
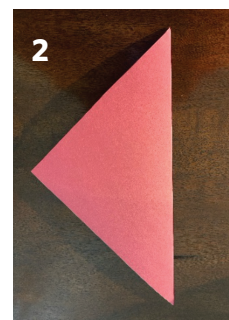
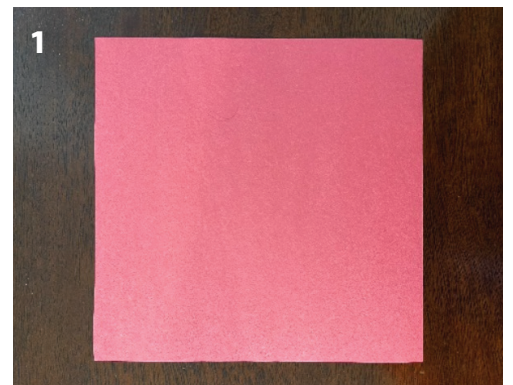


MATERIALS

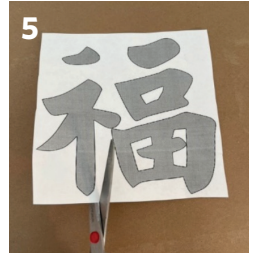
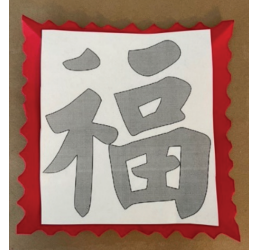
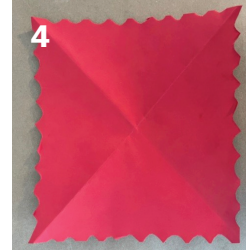
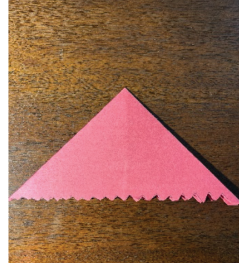
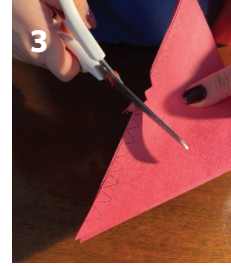
- Red Construction paper (square size)
- Pencil
- Black Marker or Paint
- Scissors
- *fú* (福) stencil
- Gold Marker or Crayon

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Take your red paper. Make sure it is a perfect square and that all sides are the same size.
2. Hold your square paper sideways, so that it looks like a diamond. Fold your diamond in half, then once more like illustrated below. Crease your edges really well, following the steps at right.



3. On the open edges of your folded paper, use a pencil to draw your pattern. Use your scissors to cut out the designs of your folded red paper. Cut out your design and create a beautiful decorative pattern inspired by the New Year. Open it only after the cutting is finished.
4. Open your paper and observe your cut out design. In the center of your design you will add the Chinese character for good fortune, *fú*. Use the *fú* template on the last page as your stencil.
5. Using scissors, cut out your *fú* character from the white paper. This paper will be used as your stencil.
6. Place your cut out *fú* character on top of your red paper. Make sure your stencil is in the center of your red paper. Using your stencil, trace and color in the *Fú* character with a gold crayon, gold pen, or paint if available. Your Chinese New Year paper cutting is complete! Hang your beautiful creations in your windows, doors, or room to call for good fortune for the New Year!



福