

Lunar New Year

“Some families celebrate **Lunar New Year**. It is the start of a new year on a calendar that follows the **moon**. Families may celebrate with time together, special foods, decorations, music, and wishes for a good year.”

(Lunar New Year dates change each year because they’re based on the lunar calendar.)

Inclusive note

“This activity is an **inclusive cultural learning experience**—children do not need to share personal beliefs or family traditions to participate.”

Learning goals (Ages 3–8)

Children will practice:

- **SEL:** kindness, welcoming others, taking turns, teamwork
- **Math:** counting, number matching, simple adding/subtracting, patterns
- **Literacy:** vocabulary, storytelling, speaking/listening
- **Creative arts + movement:** rhythm, coordination, collaborative dance

Materials

- Red paper (or any color if needed), envelopes (store-bought or folded paper)
- Paper “coins” or counters (buttons, pompoms, counting bears)
- Tape/stapler, streamers/ribbon, popsicle sticks or dowels
- Paper plates/cardboard for a simple dragon head (optional)



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- Music (any upbeat instrumental works)

Activity 1: Classroom Dragon Dance

Time: 10–20 minutes

Group size: Whole group or small groups

Set-up (easy)

1. Tape streamers to a long strip of paper (or use a sheet/scarf as the “dragon body”).
2. Optional: Make a quick dragon head from a paper plate/cardboard (kids can decorate).

How to do it

1. Explain: “In some Lunar New Year celebrations, communities do **dragon or lion dances**. Today we’ll do a classroom version to practice teamwork.”
2. Give roles:
 - 1 child holds the “head”
 - Others hold the body (spaced out)
3. Practice **leader skills**:
 - “Slow and steady”
 - “Follow the leader”
 - “High / low”
 - “Stop / go”
4. Switch roles so everyone gets a turn.



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Teacher talk (inclusive + simple)

- “We move together.”
- “We keep our hands safe.”
- “We watch the space around us.”

Safety tips

- Keep the “dragon” at waist height.
- Use walking feet (no running).
- Create a clear path.

Activity 2: Red Envelope Counting

Time: 10–15 minutes (center)

Skills: counting, number sense, one-to-one correspondence

Set-up

- Give each child 1–3 paper envelopes.
- Provide paper coins/counters and number cards (1–10).

Preschool version (3–5)

- “Pick a number card.”
- “Put that many coins in your envelope.”
- “Count them together.”

Kindergarten/early elementary version (5–8)



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- **Addition:** “Put 4 coins in. Add 2 more. How many now?”
- **Compare:** “Which envelope has more? fewer?”
- **Make 10:** “Can you make 10 coins using two envelopes?”

Important note

You can describe envelopes as “a tradition in many communities where people share **good wishes** for the new year,” without focusing on money.

Activity 3: Lucky Color Patterns

Time: 15–25 minutes

Skills: patterns, fine motor, design

Directions

1. Children make a pattern strip (AB, AAB, ABC) using:
 - red/yellow paper pieces, stickers, stamps, crayons
2. Extend: “Can you explain your pattern?”

Display title (inclusive)

- “Our Lunar New Year Patterns” or “New Year Patterns”

Activity 4: “New Year Wishes” Kindness Wall

Time: 10–20 minutes

Skills: empathy, community, writing/drawing

Directions



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1. Prompt: “Many families share kind wishes for the new year.”
2. Children draw/write a wish:
 - “kind friends”
 - “healthy bodies”
 - “peaceful classroom”
 - “helping others”
3. Post them together as a class collage.

SEL tie-in

- “How can we help make our wishes come true in our classroom?”

Inclusive Tips

Use “Lunar New Year” as the umbrella term

Lunar New Year is celebrated in multiple countries and communities (for example, it’s known as **Tet** in Vietnam and **Seollal** in Korea).

- Say: “Some families celebrate Lunar New Year in different ways.”
- Avoid: “This is how all families celebrate.”

Don’t ask children to self-identify

Avoid: “Who celebrates?” “Are you Chinese?” “Do you do this at home?”



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Instead: “If your family celebrates and you’d like to share, you can.”

Keep it classroom-safe and stereotype-free

- Avoid assuming every celebration includes dragons, fireworks, or the same foods.
- Keep the focus on **community, new beginnings, family, and kindness**.

Make participation flexible

Offer options:

- Movement OR art OR math center
- Drawing OR stickers OR tracing
- Sharing out loud OR “quiet wish” turned in privately

Language choices that help

- “Some families...”
- “Many communities...”
- “Different traditions...”



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