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Feng Shui: An Introduction

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In a world of instant communication, advanced technologies, and constant change, it's remarkable that a 3,000-year-old tradition from the Orient has captured our 21st-century imaginations. Feng Shui, pronounced "fung shway," is an exciting tool to help you make the most of your home and the life you want to live. Lowe's is happy to provide this information as a service to you.

Working Hand in Hand — Feng Shui and Chi

Literally translated, Feng Shui means "wind and water." But is it a philosophy, a science or an art? In essence, this ancient Chinese wisdom is all three. The effects of Feng Shui are felt in the mind, body and spirit in ways that enhance or diminish one's personal "chi."

Chi (pronounced "chee") is the Chinese word for energy. Chi flows through everything and is always with us. Personal levels of chi, or inner energy, fluctuate from high to low. Extreme fluctuations in this inner energy can affect your health, mood, work and relationships, so it's important to maintain balanced chi. Using the art of Feng Shui, you can consciously arrange your exterior (your home) to help balance the chi in your interior (your body).

For example, have you ever visited a home and had a bad feeling that was difficult to describe? The rooms may have been flawlessly decorated, yet felt cold, tense or uncomfortable. Most likely, the longer you stayed, the more uncomfortable you felt. Your body responded to a low level of chi.

Now, think of another house you've visited that felt warm, uplifting, and inviting – one where you instantly felt "right at home." Again, there wasn't any specific element that made you feel comfortable. You just felt good being there. The home had a more balanced level of chi.

Take a heartfelt look at your own home. When you walk through the door, do you feel the stress of the day wash away? Do you feel self-satisfied, lighter, energetic, and motivated? Or do you feel tired, restless, out of sorts and overwhelmed? Maybe it's time to do a little balancing act with Feng Shui.

A Catalyst for Change

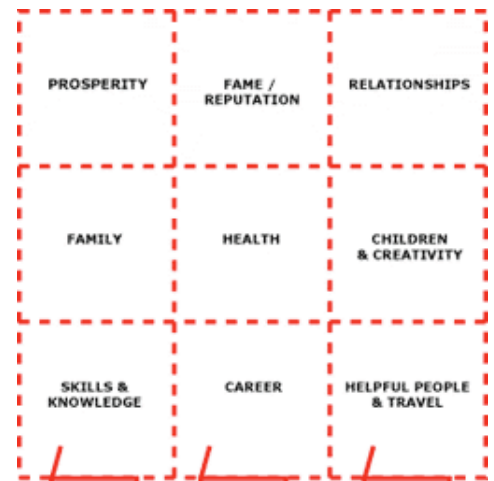
Feng Shui offers added benefits worth testing. Its techniques can be applied directly to specific life situations, such as prosperity, fame, family, relationships and health. Again, it's balancing your surroundings to bring about more of what you want in life.

You wouldn't build a house without a blueprint. And to be effective, Feng Shui requires its own blueprint called a bagua (pronounced ba-gwa). The bagua is divided into a total of nine areas representing specific life situations.

As you study the bagua, look for items within specific life areas that symbolize your feelings. If you're stressed about your finances, take a close look at the room that falls in your prosperity area. Is it dark and uninviting? Does the room contain a wilting plant you've neglected or an heirloom clock that doesn't run properly? Little things you take for granted or that go unnoticed can affect your chi in big ways.

One of the greatest benefits of do-it-yourself Feng Shui is self-awareness. In addition to creating home improvements, when you apply Feng Shui principles to your home, you gain a wonderful opportunity to evaluate your life's situations, state your intentions or goals and move into action.

Intuition, simplicity and good taste are always in tune with Feng Shui. Personalized touches (things that are especially meaningful to you) provide an added punch to your balanced environment.



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Tools to Learn the Bagua

Feng Shui tools are simple and most of them are provided here. To get started, you'll need:

- The bagua and reference chart noting the colors and elements associated with Feng Shui.
- Floor plan sketches of your home or rooms. (We've included an example and graph paper to get you started.)

Think of the bagua as a transparency, which can be placed over the floor plan of an entire house or a single room. To position the bagua correctly, look for the main door used to enter the house or room. (In some cases, the main door could be a garage or back door.) The door's position should always be located in one of three bagua areas: Skills and Knowledge, Career or Helpful People.

Now that you know where the areas of your home or rooms fall in place on the bagua, you're ready to apply appropriate Feng Shui techniques to each area.

Step One: Clear the Clutter

Look at your home's bagua. Are there areas or rooms that contain more clutter than others? What is the clutter saying about your life situation?

Clutter blocks chi, so it's time to be brave and clean out everything you no longer want or use

- Simplicity, order and accessibility are the keys to Feng Shui organization.
- Once you've decided on what you want to keep, assign each item to a specific location so you'll always know where to find it.
- Store the things you use most in places that are easy to reach and arrange similar items together.
- Be sure that you return each item to its place after you've finished using it. Remember the old adage – a place for everything and everything in its place.

In the beginning, clearing all your clutter may feel overwhelming, but don't get discouraged. Take a deep breath, start small and keep going. Just cleaning out one drawer stimulates your chi and you'll find the motivation to tackle a second drawer. You'll feel great at the end of each task.

Step Two: Color Me Creative

Do you know why your favorite color is your favorite? Perhaps because it's associated with a cherished memory or it just makes you feel good to wear it.

The psychology of color plays an important role in Feng Shui. Each area of the bagua has one or more favorite colors that enhance the life situation it represents. You may choose to devote an entire color scheme to a bagua area, but sometimes just adding a touch of the color in the form of rugs, wall decorations, lighting fixtures, plants, flowers or candles can make a difference.

	PROSPERITY - Colors: Purple, Green, Gold
	FAME/REPUTATION - Colors: Red
	RELATIONSHIPS - Colors: Pink, Red, White
	FAMILY - Colors: Green
	HEALTH - Colors: Yellow, Tan, Orange
	CHILDREN & CREATIVITY - Colors: White
	SKILLS & KNOWLEDGE - Colors: Blue, Black, Green
	CAREER - Colors: Black
	HELPFUL PEOPLE & TRAVEL - Colors: Gray, Black, White

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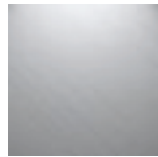
Step Three: Elementary Elements

Five natural elements are associated with the bagua: fire, metal, water, wood and earth. The elements correspond directly with life situations.

The natural elements are used individually or in conjunction with each other to build Feng Shui's "Creative Cycles" (increasing chi in certain areas) and "Destructive Cycles" (diminishing high levels of chi in particular areas).



Fire



Metal



Water



Wood



Earth

- The Creative Cycle - Fire is associated with "fame" and "reputation" within the bagua and wood is fuel for fire. If you are looking to build your reputation or become famous, place a brick-red fireplace enhanced with decorative items made of wood within the Fame and Reputation area of the bagua. If it's not practical to have fireplace, use the wood alone to create the desired levels of chi.
- The Destructive Cycle - If you feel your reputation needs improving, more water or symbols of water may be needed in your "fame" and "reputation" area. You don't have to move the fireplace. Just replace wood with actual items or symbols representing water, such as fountains, pictures of lakes or items painted black (the color of water). Water douses fire, so the levels of chi are diminished.

Step Four: Knicks and Knacks for Quick Fixes

Luckily, there are decorative items that can be used to balance chi in every area of the bagua and bring a whole new look to your rooms:

- Lighten Up! Lamps, wall sconces and candles effectively enhance chi and promote well-being.
- Reflect the good things in life. Mirrors are a powerful (and useful) enhancement in Feng Shui.
- Sound ideas include chimes, bells or musical instruments that can stimulate positive chi in almost any bagua area.
- Live it Up! Plants, flowers and other living things add energy and soothe the spirit.

Learn More About It

The views of Feng Shui presented in this article are simple. Many levels of study, choice, design, decor and application are associated with this fascinating, complex art. Feng Shui experts have studied their discipline for years and are now sharing these age-old secrets in an array of beautifully illustrated books filled with excellent do-it-yourself ideas or guidance in selecting the services of a professional consultant.