

READING

Feng shui and Zen

LEVEL

Upper-Intermediate
(B2)

NUMBER

EN_B2_1121R

LANGUAGE

English



Learning outcomes

- I can read and understand a short text about feng shui.
- I can discuss cultural practices, relaxation and well-being.



Warm-up

Have you heard of feng shui before?



How would you describe it in your own words?

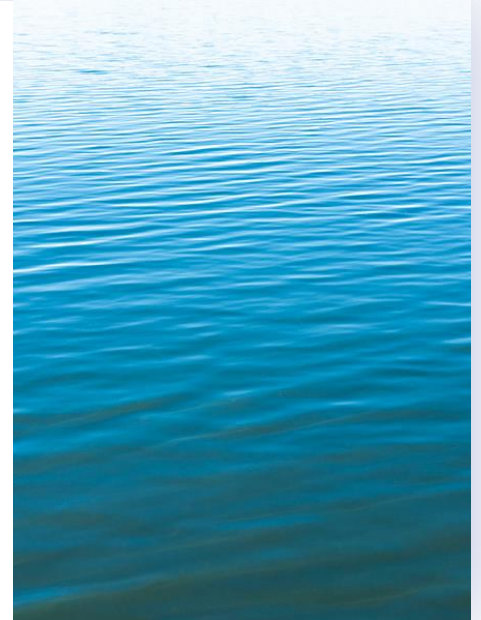


Feng shui

Read the text. **Answer** the question below.

Feng shui is an **ancient** art and science that comes from China. Translated **literally**, 'feng' means wind and 'shui' means water. In Chinese culture both elements are strongly **associated with** health.

There are two different kinds of feng shui, good feng shui refers to **good fortune** and bad feng shui to **misfortune**.



1. What is the difference between good and bad feng shui?



Feng shui

Read the text. **Answer** the questions below.

Feng shui is sometimes thought of as the **art of placement**. You might have heard people talking about feng shui in relation to **aesthetics** or even more so the **placement** of furniture and other objects.

Feng shui has always been **influential** in eastern design, **aesthetics** and **architecture**. However, in recent years its influence has **crossed over** into western style, both at work and at home.



2. What do most people think of when they hear 'feng shui'?
3. Where is feng shui becoming more popular?

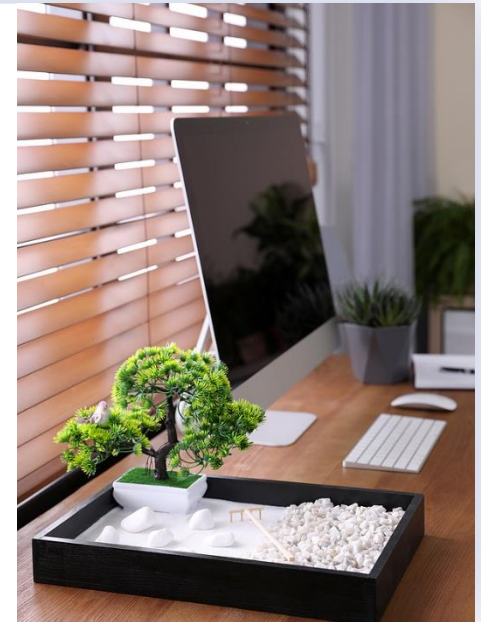


Feng shui

Read the text. **Answer** the questions below.

As the business world has grown, more and more international companies who do business with countries in East Asia have decided to **incorporate** feng shui into the design of their workplace.

Using feng shui principles in their offices helps make these environments more comfortable for **clients** from the region, while the clean and fresh design is **stylish** and appealing for everyone.



4. Why are more international companies using feng shui in their offices?
5. How would you describe the design of your workplace?



Discuss

**Think about your
own culture.**

**What is considered good luck?
What brings misfortune?**



Feng shui

Read the text. Answer the question below.

Feng shui is a complex and detailed system. It teaches us about energy in different places and gives **guidance** on how to balance and **harmonise** with the energy in different spaces. Some critics, especially in the West, have been **sceptical** of feng shui, but it's hard to disagree with some of its **basic principles**. For example, two basic principles of good feng shui in your home are to clear your **clutter**, and to try to get good quality air and light.



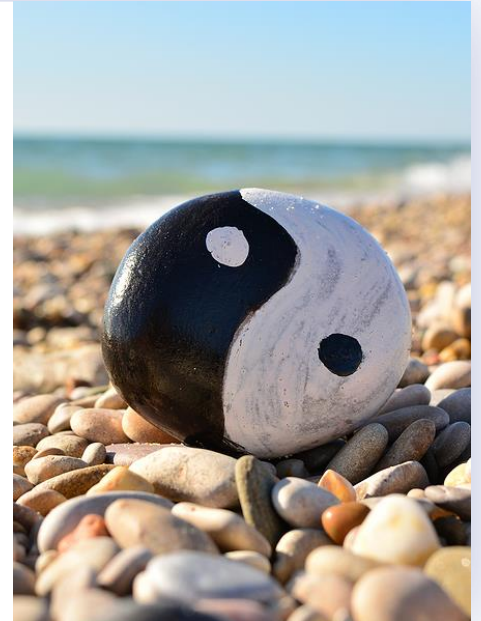
1. What are some basic principles of good feng shui?



Feng shui

Read the text. **Answer** the question below.

The theory of yin and yang is also important in feng shui. You might already have seen the **symbol** of yin and yang: two shapes, one white and one black, that together form a circle. The white shape has a black spot inside and the black shape has a white spot inside. In Chinese philosophy, yin-yang **refers to** the **interconnectedness** of **opposite forces** and how these different things together form a **balance**.



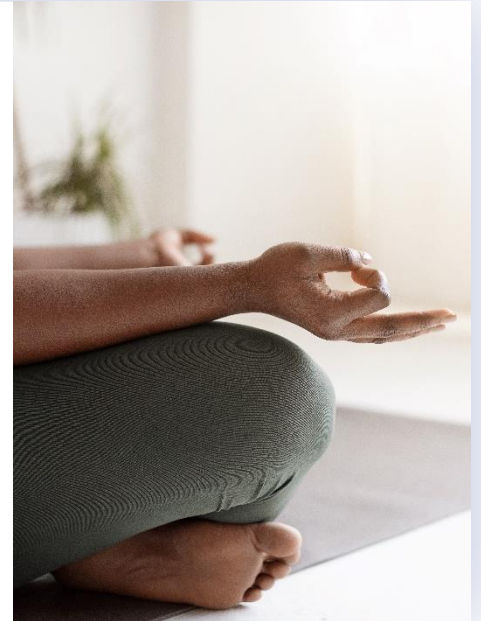
2. What does yin and yang symbolise in Chinese culture?



Zen

Read the text. **Answer** the question below.

Unlike yin-yang and feng shui, Zen has religious **origins**. In English, the term 'zen' is **associated with** the idea of peace and relaxation. So, for example, you might see adverts for a 'Zen spa retreat', or a 'Zen massage'. However, the concept of Zen comes from an important Buddhist **spiritual** practice. Zen Buddhism is a mix of Mahayana Buddhism and Taoism.



3. What are the origins of the word 'zen'?



One basic principle of good feng shui in your home is to clear your **clutter**.



If a room has lots of **clutter**, what is it full of?



How would you explain it?

Explain feng shui to someone who has never heard of it. **Use** these words to help you.

fortune

placement

energy

balance





Discuss

What is Zen?

**Had you heard
of this word before?**

**Is it also used in
your own language?**





What are your top 3 ways to relax?

Chat to a partner in breakout rooms. **Find** 3 ways you **both** like to relax.

Listening to
music

Getting a
massage

After a long day at work I usually go for a walk with my dog. I find that helps me relax!

Going to the
gym

Taking a long
walk

I really enjoy taking long walks too, or just being out in nature in general.

Going to the
spa

Reading a
book

Same here. There's nothing better than a bit of peace and quiet!



Share your top way
afterwards with the class!

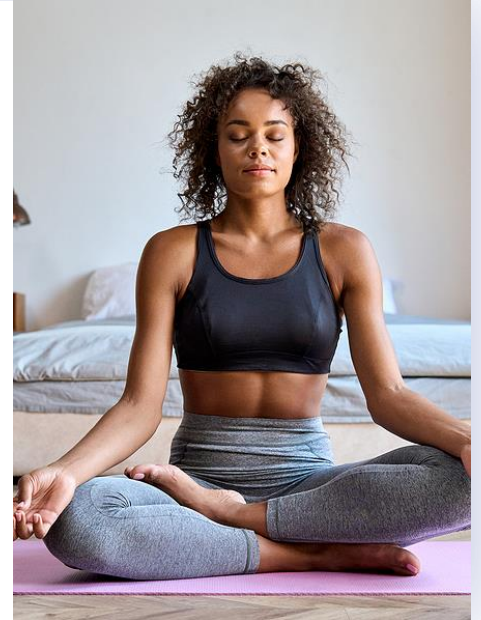


Zen

Read the text. **Answer** the questions below.

The teachings of Zen focus on **observation** and learning more about oneself in order to achieve a greater **sense of peace, fulfilment, and balance**. One important part of Zen is meditation.

During Zen meditation people often sit **cross-legged**, close their eyes, and try to **concentrate** on their breathing and living in the present moment.



1. What does Zen aim to teach?
2. What is the purpose of Zen meditation?

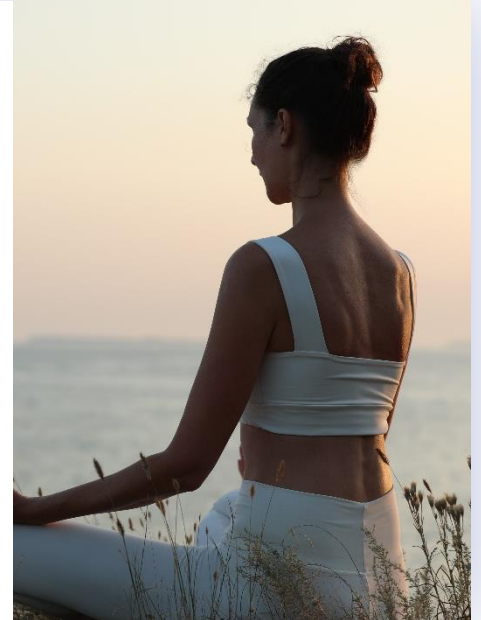


Zen

Read the text. **Answer** the question below.

Meditation is not easy; it's really hard to have a clear mind and it can be a very intense **practice**. Some monks meditate for several hours every day!

However, science, philosophy and religion all agree that regular meditation can **benefit** people's mental and physical health.



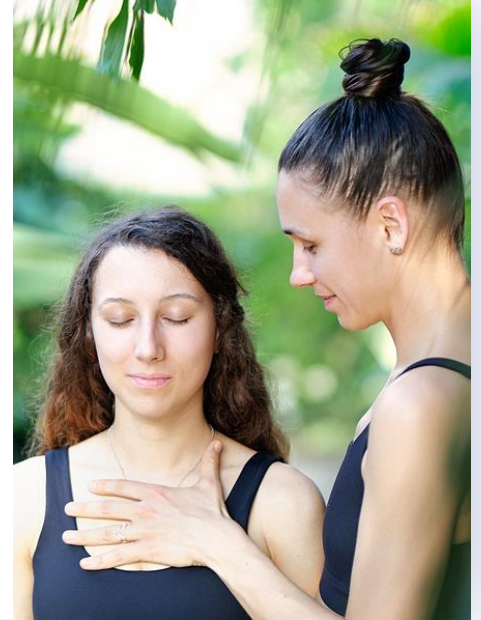
3. What makes meditating difficult?

Feng shui and zen

Read the text. Answer the question below.

As companies begin to recognise the importance of employee **well-being**, many are starting to offer meditation classes during the workday or **subscriptions** to services that teach meditation.

Given that modern life shows no sign of slowing down anytime soon, finding a little bit more balance, be this through feng shui or Zen, can only be a good thing, can't it?



4. What are some companies doing to help their workers' mental health?



How about you?

Have you ever tried meditating before?



If so, how was it? If not, would you like to?



Discuss



As companies begin to recognise the importance of employee well-being, many are starting to offer meditation classes during the workday.

How helpful do you think this idea is?

How else can companies ensure their employees are happy?

How well does the company you work for support your well-being?





End of the lesson

Idiom

as right as rain

Meaning: to be in excellent health (informal)

Example: I've been meditating and getting plenty of rest lately. I feel **as right as rain**!



Additional practice



How about you?



How would you describe the design of your home?



Have you incorporated any elements of feng shui into it?

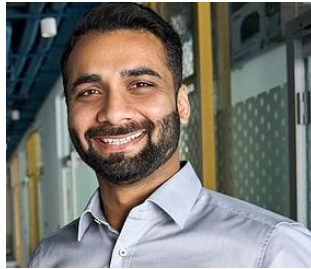


A crisis meeting

Imagine you are a senior manager. Large numbers of employees have been complaining about the company's lack of support for their health and well-being. You hold a crisis meeting with the team to discuss options. **Choose** a role below and **role-play** the meeting to **find** a solution.



Head of HR



HR Team member



Work council member



You

So, the purpose of today's meeting is to discuss the issue of employee well-being.

Exactly, many people have been complaining and we need to find a solution.

- Office design
- Annual leave
- Dress code
- Social activities
- Employee support



Write an email

Write a company-wide email. **Inform** the employees of the results of the meeting.

- Acknowledge the problem
- Outline the solution found
- Explain why the solution was chosen





Answer key

- P. 4 -6:**
1. Good feng shui refers to good fortune; bad feng shui to misfortune.
 2. They think of aesthetics or where to place furniture or objects.
 3. In the West.
 4. The business world is growing; they are doing more business in East Asia.
- P. 8-10:**
1. Clear clutter from your home; try to get in good quality air and light.
 2. The interconnectedness of opposite forces to form a balance.
 3. Buddhism.
- P. 15-17:**
1. A greater sense of peace, fulfilment and balance.
 2. To learn to live in the moment.
 3. It is difficult to clear one's mind; it's a very intensive practice.
 4. Offering meditation classes or subscriptions to service that teach meditation.



Summary

Feng shui

- *good fortune; associated with; misfortune; art of placement; aesthetics; to cross over; to incorporate*
- *guidance; to harmonise; clutter; opposite forces; balance*
- *In Chinese culture, 'feng' (wind) and 'shui' (water) are strongly **associated with** health.*

Zen

- *spiritual; observation; sense of peace; fulfilment; to concentrate*
- *meditation; practice; subscriptions*
- *The concept of Zen comes from an important Buddhist **spiritual practice**.*



Vocabulary

good fortune

associated with

misfortune

art of placement

aesthetics

to cross over

to incorporate

guidance

to harmonise

clutter

opposite forces

balance

spiritual

observation

sense of peace

fulfilment

to concentrate

meditation

practice

subscriptions



Notes

