



Money Matter\$ - 12 February 2026

By Standard Chartered Bank

Title: Save your Ang Pows – the traditions behind the red envelope

An advanced Gong Xi Fa Chai to all our faithful Money Matter\$ readers and we wish you a very prosperous year ahead!

Festivities are just around the corner, so we would like to remind you to take account of all the prosperity and good fortune you are receiving in the form of 'ang pow' or red packets when you are out and about visiting relatives and friends.

Traditional aspects of the 'ang pow'

'Ang pow' or red envelopes are mainly presented at social and family gatherings such as weddings or on holidays such as the Lunar New Year. The red colour of the envelope symbolizes good luck and is supposed to ward off evil spirits.

The amount of money contained in the envelope usually ends with an even digit, in accordance with Chinese beliefs; for instances 88 and 168 are both lucky numbers, as odd-numbered money gifts are traditionally associated with funerals.

Ang pows are typically given to the unmarried by the married. The amount of money is usually a single note to avoid heavy coins. It is traditional to put brand new notes inside ang pows. In recent years, banks also provide newish-looking notes to reduce the environmental impact of printing new banknotes.

Giving ang pows to employees prior to the New Year is also very common. This can be either a gift or a bonus. It is also believed that should you bequest them your gift their good fortunes will come back to your company.

Do's and don'ts about receiving or giving 'ang pow'

The act of requesting for ang pow would never be turned down by a married person as it would mean that he or she would be "out of luck" in the new year. In keeping with Chinese customs, newly wedded couples are also usually expected to be extremely generous with the amount offered in the ang pows, so as to receive blessings for a blissful marriage.

There is a widespread tradition that money should not be given in fours, or the number four should not appear in the amount, as the pronunciation of the word "four" resembles that of the word "death", and it signifies bad luck for many Chinese.

Ang Pows are also given at weddings. The amount offered is usually intended to cover the cost of the attendees as well as a goodwill to the newlyweds.

Never put money in a white envelope when giving money on festive or auspicious occasions, Money wrapped in white envelopes is given when the occasion is sad, like during funerals, when a gift of



money is given to help with the funeral costs. This is called 'Pak Kum' money for the family of the departed. So, if you ever come across a Chinese client please think twice about giving him or her their fee in a white envelope.

When receiving ang pow, always thank the giver and wish them well. Keep your ang pow and do not open them in front of the giver. In fact, do not open them until you are in your own privacy. The ang pow is given as a form of good wishes to you and the amount contained in the ang pow does not have any effect on what the real meaning behind the giving means.

For young children, parents should play a hand in teaching your children and respectful manners by reminding them to say thank you to the givers of their ang pows. To ensure that your children's ang pows are safe, keep the ang pows for them in the interim.

What to do with your ang pow

For young adults and teens, the thought of receiving money so easily in the form of ang pow will easily fuel the desire to purchase new trinkets and things. But instead of forcing them to take decisions that are not their own, parents should guide and caution their elder children not to spend their ang pow money foolishly and instead try to sway their children to making sound financial decisions on their own. Strike a deal with them that they can spend perhaps 10% of the amount they received while the rest should go into savings.

The ang pow that children receive are rightfully theirs and should not be taken away from them for other means. For parents receiving ang pows on behalf of their toddlers and young children, keep the ang pows in a safe place until you have time to deposit the money into your child's account. The ang pow money received over the years for your children will contribute towards giving them a good start on their savings and their future.

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