

Feng Shui: Filling Your Home with Positive Energy

Just about everyone has heard of Feng Shui (fung shway), but how many of us actually know what it is? The editorial staff at *YOU Magazine* decided to take a closer look at this popular yet misunderstood practice.



Feng Shui is half science and half art form. Developed in China over 3,000 years ago, it is an intricate discipline meant to create harmony and balance within our lives by arranging space and placing items in accordance with the charted flow of environmental energy. The goals of Feng Shui are to promote the positive energy within a structure and to either neutralize or avoid any destructive energy.

Early on, Feng Shui was known as Kan-Yu, or "The Law of Heaven and Earth". The term Feng Shui – which literally translates as "wind water" – is a derivative of a passage from the *Zhangshu (Book of Burial)*, written by Guo Pu (a writer, poet, and natural historian) during the Eastern Jin Dynasty (317-420 AD).

Traditional Feng Shui consists of two separate branches that are used together in a symbiotic fashion. The first branch is a method for classifying landforms and is known as *ti-li*. This form of Feng Shui examines how energy flows across the land as well as its effect on a building site. The second is the building characteristics branch, or *chai-yun*, which examines the flow of energy within a building and how it affects the inhabitants.

The subject of Feng Shui contains a sizeable amount of standardized knowledge and requires years of study in order to fully master. At the same time, it is also largely dependant on artistic interpretation. The following is our attempt at a more cursory explanation.

Feng Shui Basics:

1. The Two Forms of Energy

According to the principles of Feng Shui, there are two forms of energy: visible and invisible. The energy carried in landforms and external architectural features is considered visible because it manifests itself physically. Using the aforementioned *ti-li*, or landform classification of Feng Shui, practitioners can determine if the energy is positive, neutral, or destructive.

Invisible energy is what flows throughout the inside of a structure. Since it cannot be seen, it is charted through the use of special Feng Shui tools, such as the lo-p'an (geomantic compass) and the bagua, or pa-k'ua (a chart of 8 trigrams).

2. Individual Landform Classifications

Within Feng Shui, there are 8 different types of landforms. While describing the characteristics of each would take a while, we can generalize by saying that they serve to categorize all natural and man-made structures based upon their physical appearance. This is one example of the interpretive side of Feng Shui, as it is up to the practitioner to determine the classification of a specific landform (i.e. mountain range, bridge, river, monument, etc.). Some classifications are thought to promote positive energy flow, while others are believed to manifest negative energy.

3. Exterior Architecture

A practitioner of Feng Shui evaluates the energy of a building's architecture using three characteristics:

Stability – A building is generally thought of as being stable as long as all of its levels are the same size, and the building does not sit on pillars.

Balance – A building is in balance if its shape is symmetrical.

Smoothness – A building is considered to be conducive to positive energy flow if its exterior doesn't have any sharp or protruding features.

A building's architecture is also evaluated by its overall likeness. For example, structures that resemble a negative force, such as a prison, are thought of as undesirable.

4. Interior Architecture

The following are a few of the rules that apply to the interior of a building:

- The main entrance of a home or business should never be in direct alignment with either a secondary entrance or a large window. It is believed that this type of floor plan causes the departure of prosperity.
- Rough features, such as exposed beams and vaulted ceilings, promote the introduction of negative energy.
- Steep staircases, maze-like corridors, and narrow hallways increase the flow of negative energy.
- Bedrooms should not have ceiling-to-floor windows or skylights, as their presence causes occupants to lose vital positive energy while sleeping.
- To increase the flow of positive energy within the home, floor plans should be simple and levels should be clearly defined. Any hallways or staircases should be wide, well-lit, and have rounded corners.

Feng Shui Your Home

Regardless of whether you rent or own, there are many things that can be done to improve a home's Feng Shui. Here are a few guidelines for three important areas.

Bedrooms

Balancing our energy with Feng Shui depends largely on the symbiotic use of yin/yang forces. Yin is a passive force and thought to be more female. Yang is an active force associated with maleness. When it comes to the bedroom, emphasis should be placed on the yin.

In Feng Shui, the bedroom serves three very specific purposes: sleep, relaxation, and passion. With that in mind, all of your bedroom accoutrements should promote at least one of these purposes. Something like a computer desk in the bedroom would not be considered very Feng Shui.

The walls of a bedroom should be painted in softer, more neutral colors. Carpeting and flooring should be equally as neutral. The temperature of the bedroom should be kept moderate, and the lighting should be very soft. It is also important to keep the bedroom neat and tidy, as clutter is a very disruptive force in terms of sleep, relaxation, and passion.

The bed should be made of wood, as metal is a conductor of electricity and harmful to the flow of positive energy. Bed linens should echo the soft colors of the walls and floor, and should be made of natural fabrics as opposed to synthetics.

The positioning of the bed is highly important. While it is crucial to have a clear sight of the door from the bed, your head or feet should never point directly at the entrance. And, if possible, the bed should face either North or East.

Nothing should hang from the ceiling above the bed, nor should you ever position the bed directly under a window. If you must do so, it is advisable to drape the window with a natural fabric. A bed with a sturdy headboard that rests against a wall is good Feng Shui, as it is thought to promote the sense of security.

Avoid large mirrors in the bedroom, and especially stay away from pointing mirrors directly at the bed. At night, cover the mirrors to negate reflections that could be startling to the inhabitants.

Keep electronics at a minimum. In the case of an alarm clock, choose something that allows you to awaken to soft music or light that gradually brightens.

Decorations should also be peaceful in nature. An exception to this rule is a fountain. Normally thought of as being peaceful and promoting tranquility, Feng Shui theory says that water negatively affects allergies and breathing problems. If your bedroom has an adjoining bathroom, keep the toilet lid down and the door closed, especially while you're sleeping.

Foliage should also be kept to a minimum. If you do have plants in your bedroom, make sure they are growing and vibrant, and remove any plant that is struggling.

Closets

Like a bedroom, a closet should be kept neat, holding only the items you use and that are appropriate to the room where the closet exists. There should be ample floor space, as well as room to move around. If this sounds impossible, you should think about either donating a few items or moving them into the garage or other storage. Nothing that is hanging from a closet rod should ever be touching anything that is set on the floor beneath it.

Try to use matching wooden hangers, disposing of any bent-up metal ones. And, when it comes to shelves and drawer space, items should never be stacked all the way to the top. You should also separate your clothes by type (i.e. work, casual, exercise) and then organize them by color, moving from darkest to lightest. The use of the aforementioned bagua is useful in determining where each type of clothing should be placed in the closet.

If the closet also contains shoes, make sure they all point in the same direction. This practice will keep you from feeling scattered and moving in multiple directions. You would also want to place a natural deodorizer, such as a box of baking soda, inside your closet.

Make sure that all door hinges and cabinet hardware are in good working order, as squeaky or stiff doors are not good for positive energy. One last thing – unlike the bedroom, a closet should be brightly lit in order to see things easily.

Bathrooms

Bathrooms utilize water, which has the ability to allow positive energy to escape. Thus it is highly important to make sure a bathroom's Feng Shui is in proper order. This is especially true for bathrooms that are located adjacent to the front door, also known as the "entryway" for career and opportunity.

Start by making sure that the toilet lid and bathroom door remain closed when not in use. The addition of mirrors, bright lighting, and proper ventilation ensure that the positive energy stays in motion and circulates throughout the room and house. A full-length mirror can also be placed on the outside of the bathroom door. This helps to deflect ch'i and to give the illusion that the bathroom isn't there.

Just like bedrooms and closets, it is imperative to keep bathrooms clean and in good repair. Leaky faucets and running toilets are signs of money being wasted. Aside from replacing or repairing these fixtures, keeping a flower arrangement on top of the toilet tank, or on a shelf above it, is good way to control the wasting of money, as the addition of an earth element helps to control the destructive force of water. Placing either a black or red rug at the base of the toilet is yet another method for controlling the loss of wealth.

We would like to end by saying that this article is not meant as a definitive work on the subject of Feng Shui. There is far too much information available for that to be possible. Rather, our goal was to shed a little light on a highly interesting philosophy, as well as leave you with a few tips.

If you are curious to learn more, we advise you to seek out the expertise of a Feng Shui master. Start by contacting your mortgage or real estate professional for a possible referral, as Feng Shui is no longer relegated to just the Far East. Countless architects and designers are currently using Feng Shui in order to gain an added edge for creating homes and buildings, and filling them with positive energy.