

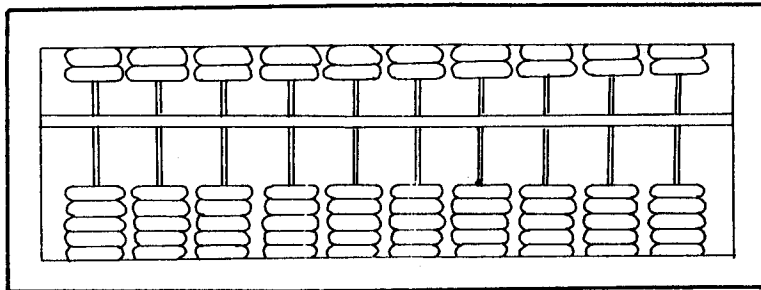
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# Abacus

At the House of Wong, Shirley often heard Third Uncle clicking the beads on his abacus as he worked on his accounts. The abacus is a tool for counting and doing simple arithmetic. It is the forerunner of our modern calculators and computers. The abacus is still used around the world, with each country having its own name and style for it. In Japan the abacus, or soroban, is used in school beginning at about the third grade, and they even have an examination for obtaining an abacus operator's license. Proficient users can be faster than someone using an electric calculator!

In China the abacus is called suan-pan, which means counting tray. This Chinese abacus has rods with five beads below and two beads above a crossbar within a wooden or plastic frame. The beads on top are called the heaven beads and the lower ones are called the earth beads.



Make your own suan-pan and learn how easy adding and subtracting can be by using this simple number machine.

### To make an abacus you will need:

1 shoebox lid

A strip of cardboard 1" (2.54 cm) wide and the length of the lid

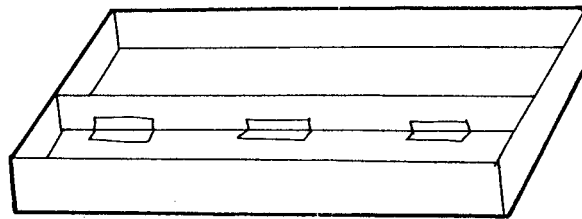
6 to 8 pieces of string at least 2" (5 cm) longer than the width of the lid

Beads, "O" shaped cereal, or salad macaroni—7 per string

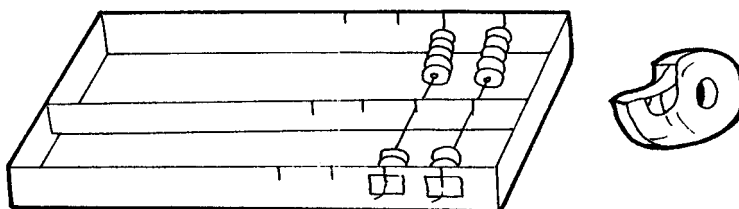
Tape

Scissors

Tape the 1" strip of cardboard in a standing position inside the lid approximately 2" from one edge to create a horizontal divider for the beads.



Cut six to eight  $\frac{1}{2}$ " (1.3 cm) slits approximately 1" apart along the top and bottom edges and the cardboard divider. Then string 7 beads on each string, and place them into the slits so that 2 beads are above the divider and 5 are below. Tape the ends of the strings to the lid.



# Fun with Chinese Horoscopes

At the beginning of the book, the author says it is the Year of the Dog, 4645. The year 4645 is based on the Chinese lunar calendar which actually began in 2637 B.C. At that time, Emperor Huang Ti, who had reigned for 61 years, introduced a 60 year cycle that is made up of five 12-year cycles. Those five cycles correspond to the five elements: wood, fire, earth, metal, and water. Legend says that Lord Buddha called all the animals to him before he left the earth, but only 12 came to say good-bye. As a reward for coming, Buddha named a year after each animal in the order that it arrived. They were: (1) Rat, (2) Ox, (3) Tiger, (4) Rabbit, (5) Dragon, (6) Snake, (7) Horse, (8) Sheep, (9) Monkey, (10) Rooster, (11) Dog, and (12) Boar. The animals are said to influence the year's events as well as the personalities of those born in that year. The year of the Boar is said to be one of goodwill for everyone. It is a year filled with a feeling of abundance and much happiness. Does this match Shirley's year? In the Chinese Lunar Calendar below, draw the animal for each year (it reads counterclockwise.) You will find the characteristics associated with each animal listed in the center. Does it seem to fit you?

