

# How to Ask Someone's Age in Chinese: 9 Common Expressions

## Guide

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Age is a topic that comes up in conversation all the time, whether you're meeting someone for the first time or catching up with an old friend.

In Chinese culture, asking someone's age is not considered impolite, but the way you ask can vary depending on the situation and the person's age.

Similarly, how you answer the question can depend on factors such as your relationship with the person and your comfort level.

In this article, we'll explore 9 real ways to ask and answer questions about age in Chinese, so you can navigate these conversations with ease and cultural sensitivity.

## Asking someone's age directly

To directly ask someone's age, use the question "How old are you?" in Chinese:

你今年多少岁？

(Nǐ jīnnián duōshǎo suì?)

Another way to ask is "What year were you born in?"

你几几年的？

(Nǐ jǐ jǐ nián de?)

你是哪一年出生的？

(Nǐ shì nǎ yī nián chūshēng de?)

These phrases are commonly used in casual conversations with friends. However, there are other more formal and informal ways to inquire about someone's age.

## Asking young people

To ask a relatively younger person about their age, you can use these three phrases:

你几岁？

(Nǐ jǐ suì?)

你多大了？

(Nǐ duōdàle?)

你多大年纪了？

(Nǐ duōdà niánjì le?)

You don't need to be very formal when asking children or someone your age or younger. However, note that “你几岁” can only be used for kids.

## Asking older people

When talking to elderly people, it's crucial to be respectful and formal. Here are two polite ways to ask their age:

您高寿？

(Nín gāoshòu?)

您贵庚？

(Nín guìgēng?)

## Asking someone's zodiac sign

If you feel uncomfortable asking someone's age, you can ask for their Chinese Zodiac sign instead.

The Chinese Zodiac is a 12-year cycle represented by animals, starting with the rat and ending with the pig. It's a significant aspect of Chinese culture, and asking someone about their sign is a common way to start a conversation. If you know their sign, you can estimate their age easily. For example:

What's your Chinese Zodiac sign?

你属什么？

(Nǐ shǔ shénme?)



## Answering questions about your age

Now let's go over how to answer these questions.

### 1. Say your age with “岁” (suì).

我 XX 岁。

(Wǒ XX suì.)

e.g.

Q: 你今年多少岁? (Nǐ jīnnián duōshǎo suì?)

*How old are you?*

A: 我今年30岁。(Wǒ jīnnián 30 suì.)

*I'm 30.*

## 2. Say your birth year with “年” (nián).

我是 xx 年的。

(Wǒ shì xx nián de.)

e.g.

Q: 你几几年的? (Nǐ jǐ jǐ nián de?)

*What year were you born in?*

A: 我是 91 年的。(Wǒ shì 91 nián de.)

*I was born in 1991.*

## 3. Share your Chinese zodiac sign with “属” (shǔ).

我属 X。

(Wǒ shǔ X.)

e.g.

Q: 你属什么? (Nǐ shǔ shénme?)

*What is your Chinese zodiac?*

A: 我属羊。(Wǒ shǔ yáng.)

*My Chinese zodiac sign is goat.*

#### 4. Use “还差” (hái chà) to say how many years are left until you reach a certain age.

我还差 YY 就 XX 了。

(Wǒ hái chà YY jiù XXle.)

e.g.

Q: 你多大年纪? (Nǐ duō dà niánjì?)

*How old are you?*

A: 我还差三年就二十了。(Wǒ hái chà sān nián jiù èrshí le.)

*I'm three years away from being 20.*

### Vague ways to respond to questions about your age

You can avoid giving your exact age by using general statements like these:

I am in my Xs.

我 X 十多岁。

(Wǒ X shí duō suì.)

e.g.

我五十多岁。(Wǒ wǔshí duō suì.)

*I'm in my fifties.*

我 X 十好几啦。

(Wǒ X shí hǎojǐ la.)

e.g.

我五十好几啦。(Wǒ wǔshí hǎojǐ la.)

*I'm in my fifties.*

I am in my early Xs.

我 X 十出头。

(Wǒ X shí chūtóu.)

e.g.

我二十出头。(Wǒ èrshí chūtóu.)

*I'm in my early twenties.*

If your birthday is coming up, you can say that you're almost X:

I am almost X.

我快 XX 啦。

(Wǒ kuài XX la.)

e.g.



我快45啦。(Wǒ kuài 45 la.)

*I'm almost 45.*

I am not yet X.

我不到XX。

(Wǒ bù dào XX.)

e.g.

我不到45。(Wǒ bù dào 45.)

*I'm almost 45.*

Asking and answering questions about age in Chinese may seem daunting at first, but with these 9 handy expressions, it can become a breeze. Whether you're asking someone how old they are or responding to questions about your own age, there are various polite and respectful phrases you can use to communicate effectively.

Remember to also keep in mind the cultural significance of the Chinese Zodiac and how it can be used as an alternative way to ask about age. With these tips in mind, you'll be able to navigate conversations about age in Chinese with ease.

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