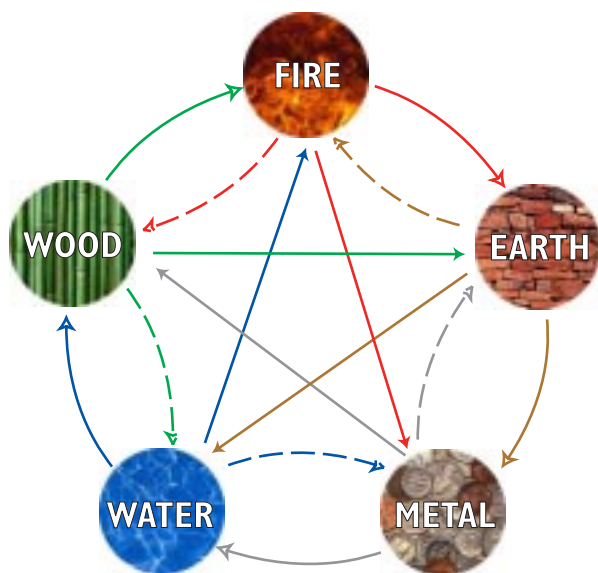


A Quick Guide to the 5 Elements



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A Quick Guide to the Five Elements

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For more information on how to use the five elements as an essential tool in feng shui, pick up a copy of:

***Fast Feng Shui:
9 Simple Principles for Transforming
Your Life by Energizing Your Home***

For ordering information, see [page 14](#) of this booklet.

The Five Elements:

Essential Qualities of Chi

The five elements describe five essential qualities of *chi* (life force energy), which you can use to enhance, control, or balance a space, depending on your needs:



METAL—the quality of contraction, sharpness, focus; when too strong, METAL energy can make you sharp-tongued and critical



WATER—the quality of flowing, making connections; too much WATER energy can make you “wishy-washy” and indecisive



WOOD—the quality of easy growth and progress; too much WOOD energy makes you aggressive or impatient, lacking compassion



FIRE—the quality of excitement, expansion, quickness; too much FIRE energy can leave you stressed out and anxious



EARTH—the quality of settling down, being receptive; too much leads to depression, sluggishness, feeling stuck or weighed down

Each element can help shift your energy and/or the energy of your space. When you understand the relationships between the five elements, and how they can affect your space and your energy, they become a powerful tool in your feng shui tool kit. **METAL** helps you concentrate and get things done; its inward focus helps you clear your head and cope with details. **WATER** is helpful when things have been stuck for a while (think of ice melting), and for improving communication. It is also associated with cash flow and opportunities. **WOOD** energy is associated with new beginnings, and it can help you make smooth progress in the projects you undertake. **FIRE** creates heat and action, and is the energy to use when you want to increase passion and intensity in any area of your life. **EARTH** energy is good when things are chaotic and you need more stability, or if you are dealing with issues of commitment, nurturing, or receptivity.

Element Shapes and Colors

Each element is associated with specific shapes and colors:



METAL—white, gold, silver, grey; round and oval shapes, arches



WATER—black and dark blues; sinuous, curvy, irregular, and wave-like shapes



WOOD—greens and light blues; tall narrow shapes



FIRE—reds, purples, bright oranges; triangles, flame shapes and other pointed or angular shapes



EARTH—browns, yellows, cool or muted oranges; low, flat, square shapes

This is the basic information that you can use to adjust the energy of specific rooms and areas of your home. For example, to spice up your relationship areas, or to enhance your reputation by activating *li gua*, add more **FIRE** energy: lights, candles, or things that are red, purple, pink, and/or triangular in shape.

WATER energy is good for enhancing *kan gua* (career) and for improving communication; if you can't use a water fountain, find images of the ocean or rivers, or choose home accessories that feature curvy and/or wave-like shapes, and that have a predominantly blue or black color scheme.

Similarly, you can add **METAL**, **WOOD**, or **EARTH** energy by working with the colors and shapes listed above.

Elements and Objects

The material that something is made of is important, as well. Some obvious examples are:

- Brass clock—METAL
- Fish tank—WATER
- Houseplants and flowers—WOOD
- Electric lights—FIRE
- Pottery bowl—EARTH

Others are not so obvious. A mahogany dining table, for example, is made out of wood, but it is square, flat, and (unless it's been painted) brown in color. In energetic terms, then, it has more EARTH energy than WOOD energy, because the wood is no longer vital and growing, and the shape and color of the table are associated with EARTH.

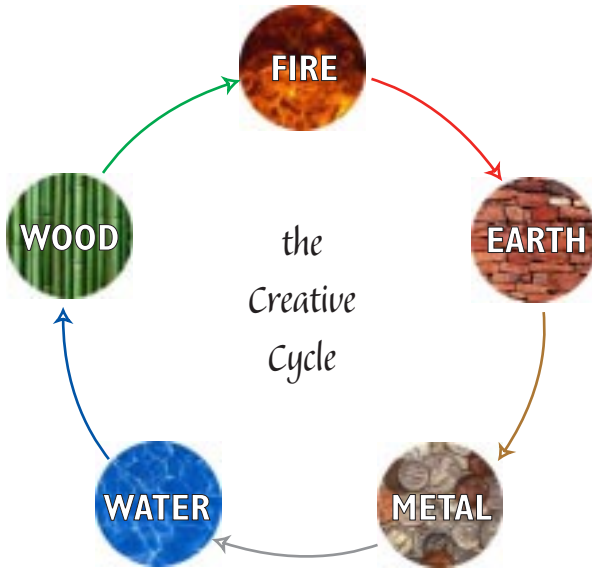
A candle is a good example of the FIRE element, but if it is a tall green candle it also has WOOD energy because of its shape and color.

Many items have a combination of qualities, so you will need to use your best judgment about how much of what kind of influence it will have on your space. Try not to go nuts puzzling over what element something represents. If it's not clear right away, then chances are good it combines several different qualities and will not have as strong an impact on your space.

Keep in mind that function, placement, and your own intention are important, too. If you worry so much about choosing the right elements that you no longer enjoy your possessions, you're trying too hard! Feng shui should be easy, graceful, and fun. If you love something, it has good *chi* for you. If you aren't sure what element it represents, focus instead on the symbolic meaning of its imagery, and use that to help you determine where to place it in your home. (For more information on the impact of the symbolic meaning of artwork and objects, please read *Fast Feng Shui: 9 Simple Principles for Transforming Your Life by Energizing Your Home.*)

THE CREATIVE CYCLE

Each of the five elements is nourished, supported, or “fed” by one of the other elements. This forms a sequence called the Creative cycle (also called the Productive cycle), as shown in the diagram below.



Here’s how it works:

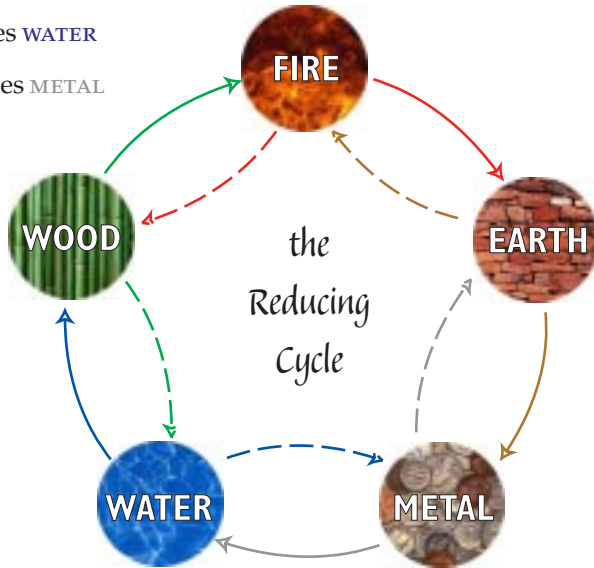
- **METAL** produces **WATER** (think of moisture condensing on a cold can of soda on a hot day)
- **WATER** nourishes **WOOD** (without water, wood will die)
- **WOOD** feeds **FIRE** (without fuel, fire cannot burn)
- **FIRE** creates **EARTH** (as the fire burns, it produces a pile of ashes; think of a volcano becoming a mountain)
- **EARTH** produces **METAL** (metal is extracted from the earth)

Use the Creative cycle when you want to increase the effect of an element in a particular space.

THE REDUCING CYCLE

As each element feeds or nourishes the next in the Creative cycle, its own energy is reduced by the effort. For example, you can counteract the strong **WATER** energy in a bathroom by adding **WOOD** energy to the space (green towels, for example). This gives the **WATER** something to do (feeding **WOOD**), reduces its strength, and helps bring things back into balance. Here's how the Reducing cycle works:

- **METAL** reduces **EARTH**
- **EARTH** reduces **FIRE**
- **FIRE** reduces **WOOD**
- **WOOD** reduces **WATER**
- **WATER** reduces **METAL**

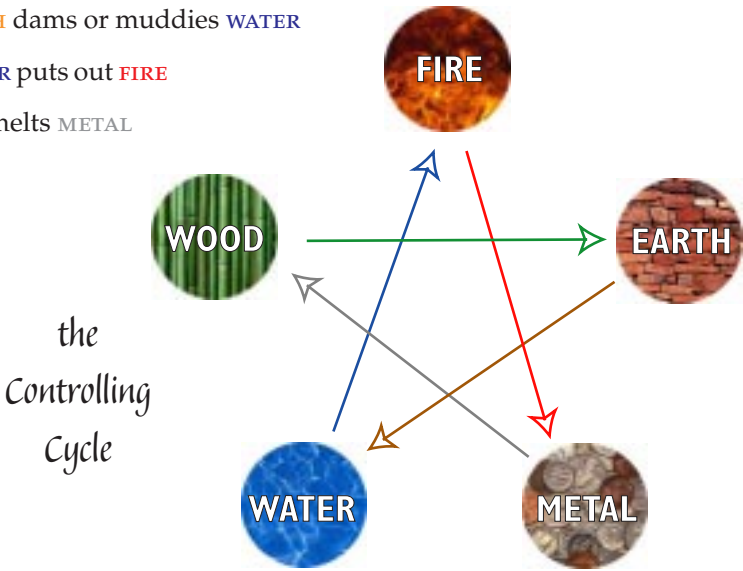


Use the Reducing cycle when you want a gentle way to bring a situation into better balance. It's easy to remember the Reducing cycle if you know the Creative cycle; just keep in mind that when one element nourishes another one, its own energy is reduced by the effort.

THE CONTROLLING CYCLE

When one element is very strong, you may need something stronger than the reducing effect to bring it back into balance. This is where the Controlling cycle comes in handy. The Controlling cycle works like this:

- METAL chops WOOD
- WOOD breaks up EARTH (think of a new crop pushing up through the soil, or of tree roots pushing down into the earth)
- EARTH dams or muddies WATER
- WATER puts out FIRE
- FIRE melts METAL



Make sure the controlling element is strong and supported. If you try to put out a bonfire with a tea-cup full of water, the water will evaporate without having much effect. Keep in mind that:

- Too much METAL can overwhelm FIRE
- Too much FIRE evaporates WATER
- Too much WATER can wash EARTH away
- Too much EARTH can smother WOOD
- Too much WOOD can take the edge off METAL

The Elements and the Ba Gua

Each *gua* is associated with one of the elements, as shown below. There are three **EARTH** *guas* (including the *tai chi*), two **WOOD** and two **METAL** *guas*, and one *gua* each for **WATER** and **FIRE**. The element of each *gua* determines the color associated with it.

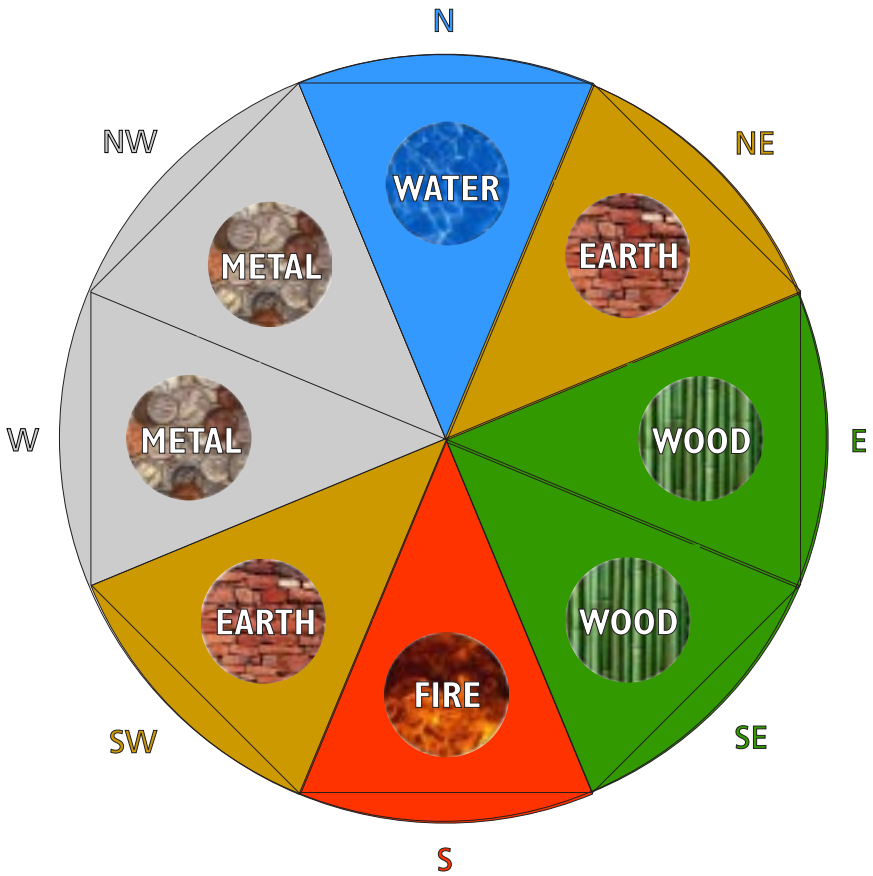
Jen gua (family) is pale green; darker greens are associated with *hsun gua* (wealth). *Hsun gua* is also associated with the color purple, because that color is symbolic of wealth. *Kun gua*, the relationship area, is red, pink, and white, because it is located between *li gua* (fame; red) and *dui gua* (creativity; white), and because pink is the color of romance. The color of *chien gua*, (helpful friends; **METAL**) is grey, because it is located between the pure white *dui gua* and the black of *kan gua* (career; **WATER**).

<p>wealth</p>  <p>WOOD green & purple</p>	<p>fame</p>  <p>FIRE red</p>	<p>relationships</p>  <p>EARTH pink</p>
<p>family</p>  <p>WOOD green</p>	<p>health</p>  <p>EARTH yellow</p>	<p>creativity</p>  <p>METAL white</p>
<p>knowledge</p>  <p>EARTH brown</p>	<p>career</p>  <p>WATER black</p>	<p>support</p>  <p>METAL white & grey</p>

Each element is naturally strong in some *guas* and weak in others, depending on its relationship to the the element associated with each *gua*. For example, since **FIRE** controls **WOOD**, **WOOD** is weak in *li gua*, which is associated with the **FIRE** element. **WOOD** is strong in *kan gua*, however, because *kan* is associated with the **WATER** element and **WATER** nourishes **WOOD**.

The Elements & the Compass Directions

In ancient times, the *ba gua* was oriented to the compass directions.* Each element is therefore also associated with a specific direction:

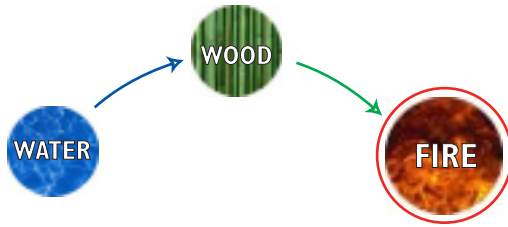


* Contemporary Western feng shui orients the *ba gua* to the front entry of a space. Many practitioners also look at the compass directions when determining areas of influence.

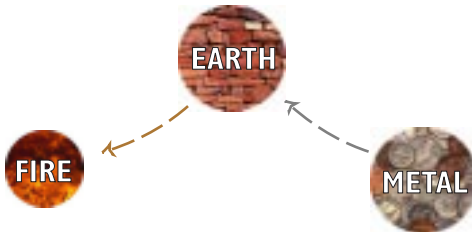
Putting it all Together

The key to using the elements successfully is to focus on the desired effect for a specific space or situation, and to work with elements appropriate to that *gua* and/or compass direction.

If you want to increase the strength of an element, add the two elements that come before it in the Creative cycle. For example, if you want to increase **FIRE** energy, add **WATER** and **WOOD** to the space. The **WATER** will feed the **WOOD**, which will enhance **FIRE**. You don't have to worry about the **WATER** reducing **FIRE**, because its energy is being diverted to create **WOOD**:



If you want to decrease the strength of an element, use the Controlling cycle or the two elements that follow it in the Creative cycle. If **FIRE** energy is too strong, adding **EARTH** and **METAL** energy will reduce the energy of **FIRE**:



Using three elements in this way is more powerful than just using one or two. Get in the habit of thinking in threes when you work with the elements, and your feng shui cures will be much more effective.



Learn how to transform your life by energizing your home with the power of feng shui!



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Now you can use the **Creative Cycle** of the elements to **transform your love life** with the magic of feng shui!



By tailoring contemporary feng shui strategies to the specific challenges of each stage of the Relationship Cycle, *Fast Feng Shui for Singles* provides a unique and highly effective program for shaking off the disappointments of the past and finally getting Cupid on your side.

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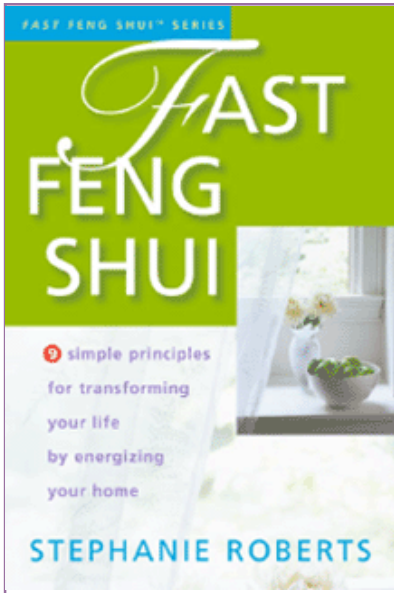
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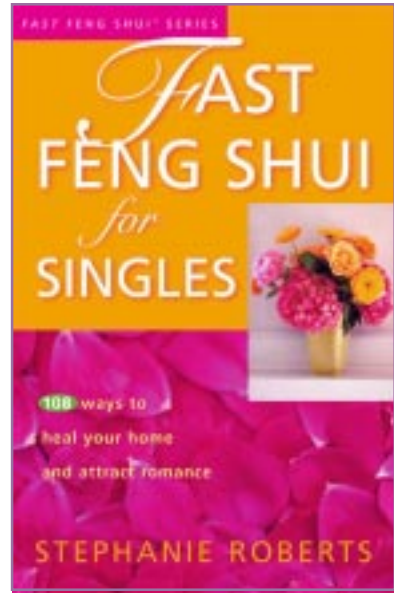
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