

The Five Elements—Nature’s Design Team

Feng Shui views the five elements of Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal, and Water as the basic building blocks of life and observes that health and happiness are best “held in place” when *all five* are included in your home’s design. Because each element is expressed in a wide variety of ways, learning to work with them is like learning a new language. The more fluent you are, the richer the elemental dialog becomes between you and your surroundings.

You can learn the basics by elementally assessing one room in your home. Your goal is to make sure that every element is included in ways that please you. Make note of:

- Things literally made out of an element, such as Wooden or Metal furnishings.
- Items associated with an element such as a marble tabletop (Metal), a mirror (Water), or plants (Wood).
- Colors related to each element, like red (Fire) or yellow (Earth).
- Artwork and décor that portray an element, such as “Fiery” animal statues or a “Watery” ocean painting.

The Wood element is found in:

- wooden furniture and accessories.
- all plants and flowers, including silk and dried.
- plant-based cloth and textiles such as cotton and rayon.
- floral upholstery, wall coverings, draperies, and linens.
- art portraying gardens, plants, and flowers.
- columnar shapes, such as pillars and pedestals.
- stripes.
- blue and green tones.

The Wood element fosters intuition, creativity, flexibility, and new growth. Too much Wood can promote a sense of being overwhelmed, while too little can impede intuitive and creative flow.

The Fire element is found in:

- lighting, including electric, candles, and fireplaces.
- items made from animals, such as fur, leather, bone, silk, and wool.
- art portraying people or animals.
- art depicting sunshine, fire, or other bright illumination.
- triangles, pyramids, and cone shapes.
- red tones.

The Fire element activates leadership qualities and kindles healthy emotions. Too much Fire stimulates aggression, impatience, and impulsive behavior, while too little promotes depression and moodiness.

The Earth element is found in:

- adobe, brick, and tile.
- ceramic and earthenware objects.
- square and rectangular shapes.
- art portraying earthy landscapes.
- yellow and all earth tones.

The Earth element enhances strength, sensuality, order, practicality, and stability. Too much Earth creates an atmosphere that's too serious or conservative, while too little promotes clutter and chaos.

The Metal element is found in:

- all metals, including stainless steel, copper, brass, and aluminum.
- cement, and stone such as marble, granite, and flagstone.
- natural crystals and gemstones.
- art and sculpture made from metal or stone.

- circular, oval, and arched shapes.
- white and light pastels.

The Metal element enhances mental acuity and strengthens presence of mind, even in times of stress. Too much Metal creates mental rigidity, stubbornness, and the inability to compromise; while too little promotes indecisiveness and procrastination.

The Water element is found in:

- fountains and water features.
- reflective surfaces such as cut crystal, glass, and mirrors.
- flowing, free-form shapes.
- art portraying water.
- black and all dark tones, such as charcoal gray and navy blue.

The Water element enhances relaxation, introspection, and the ability to go with the flow. Too much Water promotes spacey behavior and diminishes productivity, while too little encourages stress, rivalry, and anxiety.

You'll also notice that many items are elemental combinations. For instance, an aquarium's water and glass express Water; the plants depict Wood; the fish symbolize Fire; the sand is Earth; and the rocks represent Metal. When specifically chosen for their elemental qualities, decor items such as a vase of flowers, an arrangement of framed photographs, or select table and bed linens can add missing elements and bring a room into perfect balance. Enjoy designing with the five elements in mind, knowing that your creative choices are enhancing the health and happiness in your home.

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