

BaZi Starter Guide

Read the Four Pillars as a structured map of temperament, relationships, work patterns, and timing.

YEAR	MONTH	DAY	HOUR
庚	壬	戊	—
午	午	子	—
Metal / Horse	Water / Horse	Earth / Rat	Unknown

WOOD	FIRE	EARTH	METAL	WATER
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What this guide will give you

BaZi is often introduced as a collection of symbols. A useful reading goes further: it connects those symbols into a coherent description of how a person tends to use energy, respond to pressure, form relationships, and move through changing seasons.

This short guide gives you the vocabulary needed to understand a Four Pillars chart without turning it into a fixed verdict.

01

The Four Pillars

How year, month, day, and hour organize the chart.

02

Heavenly Stems

The visible mode through which elemental energy is expressed.

03

Earthly Branches

Seasonal context, stored energy, and the twelve animal signs.

04

Five Elements

A language for movement, balance, support, and control.

05

Day Master

The reference point used to interpret the rest of the chart.

06

Luck Cycles

How timing changes the emphasis without changing the whole person.

A responsible starting point

Use BaZi as a framework for reflection and decision support. It is not a replacement for medical, legal, financial, or mental-health advice.

A map of pattern and timing

BaZi, also called the **Four Pillars of Destiny**, maps the year, month, day, and hour of birth into eight Chinese characters. Each character belongs to a cycle and carries information about element, polarity, season, and relationship.

The chart is not read one symbol at a time. Meaning comes from relationships: what supports the Day Master, what drains it, which qualities are abundant or scarce, and how the structure changes when a new cycle arrives.

A useful reading separates three layers:

01

Baseline pattern

The birth chart describes the starting configuration.

02

Lived expression

Family, culture, choices, and skills shape how the pattern appears.

03

Timing

Luck cycles and annual influences change which themes become easier or louder.

A chart describes tendencies and conditions. It does not remove choice, context, effort, or uncertainty.

The Four Pillars

YEAR	MONTH	DAY	HOUR
庚	壬	戊	甲
午	午	子	寅
Metal / Horse	Water / Horse	Earth / Rat	Unknown

Every pillar contains a **Heavenly Stem** above an **Earthly Branch**. The upper character is more visible; the lower character carries seasonal and stored influences.

01

Year Pillar

Ancestral context, public environment, and early social field.

02

Month Pillar

Seasonal strength, work environment, and the formative family system.

03

Day Pillar

The Day Master and the intimate or private sphere.

04

Hour Pillar

Projects, later life, long-range aims, and private aspirations.

If the birth hour is unknown

A meaningful reading is still possible from the year, month, and day pillars. Hour-specific conclusions should be marked as provisional.

The Ten Heavenly Stems

The Five Elements each appear in a Yang and a Yin form. Together they create ten Heavenly Stems. These are not personality labels; they are modes through which elemental energy becomes visible.

ELEMENT	YANG	YIN	CORE MOVEMENT
Wood	甲 Jia	乙 Yi	Initiation, growth, adaptability
Fire	丙 Bing	丁 Ding	Visibility, warmth, refinement
Earth	戊 Wu	己 Ji	Stability, integration, cultivation
Metal	庚 Geng	辛 Xin	Structure, precision, discernment
Water	壬 Ren	癸 Gui	Movement, insight, connection

The Day Stem is called the **Day Master**. It becomes the reference point for interpreting the rest of the chart.

The Twelve Earthly Branches

The Earthly Branches anchor the chart in season and time. They are commonly represented by the twelve zodiac animals, but each branch also stores one or more elemental influences.

子 Zi · Rat Water · 23:00–01:00	丑 Chou · Ox Earth · 01:00–03:00
寅 Yin · Tiger Wood · 03:00–05:00	卯 Mao · Rabbit Wood · 05:00–07:00
辰 Chen · Dragon Earth · 07:00–09:00	巳 Si · Snake Fire · 09:00–11:00
午 Wu · Horse Fire · 11:00–13:00	未 Wei · Goat Earth · 13:00–15:00
申 Shen · Monkey Metal · 15:00–17:00	酉 You · Rooster Metal · 17:00–19:00
戌 Xu · Dog Earth · 19:00–21:00	亥 Hai · Pig Water · 21:00–23:00

The Five Elements

WOOD	FIRE	EARTH	METAL	WATER
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Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal, and Water describe movement, not material objects. Their meaning comes from two linked cycles.

The productive cycle

Wood feeds Fire. Fire creates Earth. Earth bears Metal. Metal enriches Water. Water nourishes Wood. This cycle shows support, output, and the movement of resources.

The regulating cycle

Wood controls Earth. Earth contains Water. Water controls Fire. Fire shapes Metal. Metal cuts Wood. Regulation can create discipline and usefulness; excess control can create pressure.

Balance does not mean equal percentages

A strong chart may need an element that releases or regulates energy. A weak chart may need support. Season and structure matter more than a simple count.

Think in terms of function: What is abundant? What is useful? What is missing? Which relationship changes the whole pattern?

Day Master and chart strength

The Heavenly Stem of the Day Pillar is the Day Master. It is the reference point used to classify the other elements as support, expression, resources, authority, or wealth.

01

Season

The Month Branch establishes the dominant climate.

02

Roots

Branches can anchor and reinforce the Day Master.

03

Support

Resource and companion elements can strengthen it.

04

Drain and pressure

Output, wealth, and authority can use or regulate its energy.

Strength is not the same as goodness. A strong Day Master may need direction and release; a weaker Day Master may be highly effective when the environment provides the right support.

Avoid one-word identities

“You are Earth” is only a beginning. The same Earth Day Master can express very differently depending on season, roots, combinations, and timing.

Luck Cycles and annual timing

A BaZi chart is read through time. Ten-year Luck Cycles change the background conditions, while annual and monthly influences bring shorter waves of opportunity, pressure, visibility, or recovery.

01

Ten-year cycle

The long chapter: environment, priorities, and repeated themes.

02

Annual influence

The year's emphasis and its interaction with the birth chart.

03

Monthly influence

Useful for sequencing attention and pacing decisions.

Timing does not mean that one date guarantees an outcome. It helps you ask better questions: When should I consolidate? When is experimentation easier? When should I leave more room for recovery, negotiation, or verification?

Use timing to improve preparation, not to outsource judgment.

A responsible reading sequence

01

Confirm the inputs

Date, local time, place, gender, and whether the hour is known.

02

Establish the season

Begin with the Month Branch and the overall climate.

03

Assess the Day Master

Look for roots, support, drain, and pressure.

04

Identify the structure

Find the relationships that organize the chart.

05

Translate into lived language

Connect symbols to work, relationships, habits, and choices.

06

Add timing last

Interpret cycles only after the baseline chart is coherent.

Good interpretation is testable

A useful reading should give you clear observations to verify against your life. It should name uncertainty and avoid fear-based claims.

YOUR NEXT STEP

Bring the chart into focus

You now have the core vocabulary: pillars, stems, branches, elements, Day Master, and timing. The next step is to see how these relationships combine in one chart.

Start with a free chart

Use the Tengyunzi calculator to generate your Four Pillars. If the birth hour is unknown, choose “Unknown” and keep hour-specific interpretation provisional.

Continue at tengyunzi.com

Free Calculator · Generate the chart

What’s Inside · Preview all 24 report sections

Immediate AI Report · \$6.99, delivered after payment

Written by Tengyunzi · \$99, delivered within 72 hours