

# 泰山壓頂

*tai4 shan1 ya1 ding3*

A truck carrying a heavy load of recycled metal flipped on Ching Cheung Road, Kowloon, falling onto a car in the next lane and crushing its roof.

Looking at the extent of the damage to the car in the news picture, it seems no one in it could have survived. But fortunately the 50-year-old driver escaped with slight injuries, so did the truck driver. The media used the idiom “泰山壓頂” (*tai4 shan1 ya1 ding3*) to describe the accident.

“泰山” (*tai4 shan1*) is “Mount Tai,” “壓” (*ya1*) “to press down,” “to push down,” and “頂” (*ding3*) “the top,” “the top of the head.” Literally, “泰山壓頂” (*tai4 shan1 ya1 ding3*) is “Mount Tai pressing on the top of the head.”

Mount Tai, in Shandong, is regarded as the foremost of China’s “five great mountains.”

## Idiom by Lon Yan

So figuratively, “泰山” (*tai4 shan1*) means “a thing of great weight or import.”

“泰山壓頂” (*tai4 shan1 ya1 ding3*) means “to bear down on one with the weight of Mount Tai,” “being subject to an overwhelming force,” “to be under extremely great pressure.”

In this case, the idiom is used to refer to physical weight. But it is more often used in its figurative sense, like when the boss gives an order, particularly one that is unreasonable, employees will privately express their dismay by saying “泰山壓頂” (*tai4 shan1 ya1 ding3*) - they will have no choice but to do whatever the boss says!

**Terms containing the character “壓” (*ya1*) include:**

壓力 (*ya1 li4*) - pressure

壓迫 (*ya1 po4*) - to oppress

受壓 (*shou4 ya1*) - to be under pressure

減壓 (*jian3 ya1*) - to reduce pressure; to relax