

# 易如反掌

*yi4 ru2 fan3 zhang3*

Students have been lamenting about how difficult the Diploma of Secondary Education Examination papers have been.

But for a change this year, the English papers were said to be the easiest ever. Students and teachers alike found passages on food trucks and the speech by Financial Secretary John Tsang Chun-wah in general a welcome break from touchy political topics.

The listening part of the Chinese paper was also reported to be simpler than those in previous years. When a task is really easy, we describe it as “易如反掌” (*yi4 ru2 fan3 zhang3*).

“易” (*yi4*) is “easy,” “如” (*ru2*) “like,” “similar to,” “反” (*fan3*) “to turn over” and “掌” (*zhang3*) “the palm of a human hand.”

Literally, “易如反掌” (*yi4 ru2 fan3 zhang3*) is “as easy as turning one’s hand over.” The idiom means “very easy,” “needs no effort.”

## Idiom by Lon Yan

“It’s a piece of cake” is an English expression that has the same meaning as “易如反掌” (*yi4 ru2 fan3 zhang3*), so is “it’s a walk in the park.”

Rocket science is not easily grasped by common folks, so people say “it’s not rocket science” to mean something is not really that difficult. “難比登天” (*nan2 bi3 deng1 tian1*) is literally “more difficult than going up to the sky” or “harder than going to the outer space,” which, of course, needs rocket science. This saying describes a goal that is difficult to reach.

When someone gives you a job and you see no problem doing it, you can say “易如反掌” (*yi4 ru2 fan3 zhang3*).

**Terms containing the character “掌” (*zhang3*) include:**

鼓掌 (*gu3 zhang3*) - to applaud

掌握 (*zhang3 wo4*) - to master; to grasp

掌權 (*zhang3 quan2*) - to be in power

掌故 (*zhang3 gu4*) - tales about old time