

# 吹毛求疵

*chui1 mao2 qiu2 ci1*

Pictures of non-eligible people sitting in “priority seats” on MTR trains have been posted online and has triggered hot debate.

Some people criticized commuters for occupying seats designated for those in need. Others countered there really wasn't a problem as the carriage was almost empty at the time.

After all, it was noted, there isn't a rule that says priority seats must not be occupied at any time, though passengers should give them up to “the elderly, the disabled, pregnant mothers and others in need.”

*Headline Daily* took issue, rather, with the practice of people indiscriminately taking pictures of others and posting them on the web for “public condemnation.”

Its editorial argued that while people should behave with decency in a civilized society, holding “trials by public” on the most frivolous matters should not be encouraged. Such conduct, it said, was “吹毛求疵” (*chui1 mao2 qiu2 ci1*).

## Idiom by Lon Yan

“吹” (*chui1*) is “to blow,” “毛” (*mao2*) “hair,” “feather,” “求” (*qiu2*) is “to look for,” “to request,” “to demand” and “疵” (*ci1*) “flaw,” “blemish.” Literally, “吹毛求疵” (*chui1 mao2 qiu2 ci1*) is “blow hair to look for flaw,” “to blow apart the hairs upon a fur to discover if there is any defect.”

“吹毛求疵” (*chui1 mao2 qiu2 ci1*), therefore, means “to be fastidious,” “to nitpick,” “to pick fault unfairly,” “to find fault intentionally,” “criticize unfairly.”

When you have done a good job but someone is still trying to look for flaws, you can express your annoyance by saying: “Don't 吹毛求疵 (*chui1 mao2 qiu2 ci1*)!”

### Terms containing the character “毛” (*mao2*) include:

毛病 (*mao2 bing4*) – a defect; shortcomings; trouble

毛巾 (*mao2 jin1*) – a towel; a face-cloth; a wash-cloth

毛髮 (*mao2 fa4*) – hair

毛衣 (*mao2 yi1*) – a woolen sweater