

# 摩拳擦掌

*mo2 quan2 ca1 zhang3*

The Legislative Council elections are coming up, and all political parties are busy mapping strategies.

Election results are never predictable, and it is even less so this time. Pundits noted that there are many factors that could unsettle “traditional” vote distribution between the two major opposing camps.

Quite a few longtime politicians in both the democratic and establishment camps are calling it a day. There is also a new breed of young “localists” who could well wrestle pivotal blocs of votes away from incumbents.

All potential candidates and political camps are on high alert and are “摩拳擦掌” (*mo2 quan2 ca1 zhang3*).

“摩” (*mo2*) is “to rub,” “拳” (*quan2*) is “fist,” “擦” (*ca1*) “to wipe,” “to rub” and “掌” (*zhang3*) “the palm.” Literally, “摩拳擦掌” (*mo2 quan2 ca1 zhang3*) is “rub fist wipe palm,” “to rub one’s fists and wipe one’s palms.”

## Idiom by Lon Yan

When people rub their fists and their palms, they are usually getting ready for a fight. It is also a sign of eagerness to proceed with a task. So “摩拳擦掌” (*mo2 quan2 ca1 zhang3*) means, figuratively, “to get ready for a fight,” “to roll up one’s sleeves for battle,” or “to be eager to start on a task.”

The idiom has been used in local newspapers in various contexts, including soccer teams preparing for a major league competition, shopping malls getting ready to compete for customers before a peak shopping season, and even trainers and jockeys working hard to get their horses in form for a big race.

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

掌握 (*zhang3 wo4*) – to master; to know well; to control

掌心 (*zhang3 xin1*) – the center of the palm; the hollow of the palm

鼓掌 (*gu3 zhang3*) – to clap; to applaud

腳掌 (*jiao3 zhang3*) – the sole of the foot