

掉以輕心

diao4 yi3 qing1 xin1

Police staged a large-scale anti-riot exercise before the Legislative Council elections.

Policemen in anti-riot gear set off smoke grenades and tackled “rioters” at the Fan Ling Police Tactical Unit headquarters, a clear show of force. On election day, more than 4,000 policemen were said to have been deployed to deal with any potential disturbances.

Clearly, after Occupy Central and the street riots in Mong Kok, the police was not “掉以輕心” (*diao4 yi3 qing1 xin1*) with keeping order during the elections.

“掉” is “to lose,” “to discard,” “to drop,” “以” is “to use as,” “with,” “輕” (*qing1*) “light,” “slight in degree,” “without due consideration,” “belittle,” and “心” “the heart,” “mind,” “intention.” “輕” (*qing1*) in this idiom refers to “輕率” (*qing1 shuai4*), meaning “rash,” “hasty,” “reckless,” “unthinking,” “thoughtless.” Literally, “掉以輕心” (*diao4 yi3 qing1 xin1*) is “to drop a light heart.”

Idiom by Lon Yan

The idiom means “to lower one’s guard,” “to treat something lightly,” “to take something lightly.”

The idiom describes the attitude of failing to give due weight and consideration to a serious matter. It can be used as advice.

When your friend receives a letter from the Inland Revenue Department giving the final warning over the payment of outstanding tax, and your friend ignores it, you can tell him: “This is not a matter for you to ‘掉以輕心’ (*diao4 yi3 qing1 xin1*).”

When someone has a fever for three weeks and still refuses to see a doctor, you can also caution him not to “掉以輕心” (*diao4 yi3 qing1 xin1*).

Terms containing the character “輕” (*qing1*) include:

輕鬆 (*qing1 song1*) – relaxed

輕視 (*qing1 shi4*) – to belittle; to disdain

輕微 (*qing1 wei1*) – slight; trifling

輕敵 (*qing1 di2*) – to underestimate the enemy