

# Idiom by Lon Yan

## 不分輕重

*bu4 fen1 qing1 zhong4*

What do you do if someone didn't flush the toilet after using it at a restaurant? Most people would just shrug and use the next cubicle.

But a Toronto man thought the matter warrant police attention, so he called 911, which upset the police, who issued a warning that not flushing the toilet, "although impolite", isn't something you should "tie up" the emergency line with.

If people do that in Hong Kong, we would probably need to triple the size of the police force as many people have the nasty habit not flushing the toilet after use. In any event, calling the police for trivial matters is an example of "不分輕重" (*bu4 fen1 qing1 zhong4*).

"不" (*bu4*) "no," "not," "分" (*fen1*) "to distinguish," "to divide," "輕" (*qing1*) "light," "slight in degree or extent," and "重" (*zhong4*)

"heavy," "important," "serious." Literally, "不分輕重" (*bu4 fen1 qing1 zhong4*) is "not distinguishing between light and heavy."

"輕重" (*qing1 zhong4*), in the idiom, is analogy for "unimportant and important." So the idiom means "having no sense of priority."

Wasting police resources is an offence in many places, but these laws are clearly quite inadequate in dealing with people's infinite capacity for "不分輕重" (*bu4 fen1 qing1 zhong4*).

Police emergency assistance had actually been sought in various places in the world for reasons including "husband won't eat dinner," "someone else's cat in backyard," "neighbor's dog pooped on my lawn," "pigeon acting strangely on my deck and wouldn't fly away even when I clapped my hands." A woman even called, trying to date a policeman "who is really cute!"

### Terms containing the character "輕" (*qing1*) include:

輕易 (*qing1 yi4*) – easily; easy

輕鬆 (*qing1 song1*) – free and easy; light; relaxed

輕微 (*qing1 wei1*) – slight; to a small extent

輕巧 (*qing1 qiao3*) – light and handy; easy; simple