

Most Popular Mandarin Chinese Words (2016 Edition)

汉语流行词汇 (2016版)

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5. 初恋(chūliàn) First love
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7. 第三者(dìsānzhě) Someone who is in an adulterous relationship with a married man or woman
8. 暗送秋波(ànsòngqiūbō) Secretly to cast flirtatious looks at somebody
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5. 绯闻(fēiwén) Pink news/ Love affair
6. 狗仔队(gǒuzǎidui) Paparazzi
7. 大腕(dàwànr) Big shot
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4. 黑哨(hēishào) Bad ref. calls
5. 乌龙球(wūlóngqiú) Own goal
6. 爆冷门(bàolěngmén) To have an unexpected winner
7. 翻盘(fānpán) To turn defeat into victory
8. 东道主(dōngdào zhǔ) Host
9. 黑马(hēimǎ) Dark horse
10. 力挺(lìtǐng) To support strongly



Chapter One: Top Ten Popular Daily Chinese Words

第一章：汉语十大生活流行词汇

Chapter One: Top Ten Popular Daily Chinese Words

第一章：汉语十大生活流行词汇

1. 相亲(xiāngqīn) Blind date/to have a blind date

Origin

Caught up in the hustle and bustle of city life and striving to get ahead, many "剩男(shèngnán) *single men*" and "剩女(shèngnǚ) *women*" find themselves alone as a result of their excessive devotion to work. It is under these circumstances that "相亲(xiāngqīn) *blind dating*" has grown incredibly in popularity. TV programs based around the concept of the "相亲(xiāngqīn) Blind date" have sprung up to cater to this need. Some prominent TV programs like "非诚勿扰(Fēichéngwùrǎo)" and websites like "世纪佳缘(Shìjìjiāyuán)" and "百合网(Bǎihéwǎng)" have not only led the industry to a new prosperous era, but have also provided viewers with a much needed platform for socializing. The market dominance of such platforms reflects the prevalence of blind dating in today's society.

In fact, the phenomenon of the blind date can be traced back to ancient China. At that time, through the work of matchmakers, two families who were previously unacquainted would meet and evaluate the other family's background and status. If both sides were satisfied, a marriage would be arranged. A major difference between this ancient practice and what we find today is that the decision making over partner choice and marriage has shifted from the parents into the hands of the couple themselves.

Example

Mary: 嗨，听说你昨天去相亲了，怎么样啊？

Hāi, tīngshuō nǐ zuótiān qù xiāngqīn le, zěnmeyàng a?

Hi, I heard that you had a blind date yesterday. How was it?

Tina: 别提了，我一点儿感觉都没有。

Biétí le, wǒ yìdiǎnr gǎnjué dōu méiyǒu.

Don't remind me. I have no feelings for him at all.

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Chapter One: Top Ten Popular Daily Chinese Words

第一章：汉语十大生活流行词汇

2. 裸婚(luǒhūn) Getting married with no car, no house, and no wedding ceremony

Origin

"裸婚(luǒhūn) *getting married without having a car, a house, and an elaborate wedding ceremony*" became a popular internet phrase recently. A vastly growing number of young people are putting less emphasis on the "traditional" marriage practice."

The typical person willing to "裸婚(luǒhūn)" or "get married without a car, a house, and an elaborate wedding" is in the 20-35 age group, and more open-minded and willing to accept new trends than the average person. Some are well educated, "白领(báilǐng) *white-collar workers*" with high-level incomes. They believe that there is nothing wrong with two people living together with a marriage certificate and not having done any of the traditional customs.

Example

Lily: 你打算什么时候生宝宝?

Nǐ dāsuan shénme shíhou shēng bǎobao?

When do you plan to have a baby?

Lucy: 我们是裸婚，等攒够了钱，再做打算吧。

Wǒmen shìluǒhūn, děng zǎn gòu le qián, zài zuò dāsuan ba.

We got married without a car, a house, and a wedding ceremony. We plan to have children once we have saved enough money.

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第一章：汉语十大生活流行词汇

3. 低调(dīdiào) Keep a low profile

Origin

The word “低调(dīdiào)” means to keep a low profile. It comes from a sentence “高调做事，低调做人(Gāodiào zuòshì, dīdiào zuòrén),” which means to work in a high profile and behave in a low profile. Another sentence shares the same meaning: “竖起桅杆做事，砍倒桅杆做人 (Shùqǐ wéigǎn zuòshì, kǎndǎo wéigǎn zuòrén).” It means that when you try to catch fish on the sea, you can put up the mast to speed up your ship. And when you encounter the storm, you should cut the mast off to survive.

Usage

“低(dī)” means low. In the word “低调(dīdiào),” it also refers to something inconspicuous. And “调(diào),” as a noun, can be used to refer to melody and tune of music. “低调(dīdiào)” means that one is modest and prudent toward people, and should not make a show of his ability in front of others. So when there are people who tend to flaunt themselves in public, we can say “you should 低调(dīdiào) *keep a low profile.*”

Examples

1. 我们在整个事件中必须保持低调。
Wǒmen zài zhěnggè shìjiàn zhōng bìxū bǎochí dīdiào.
We must keep the whole thing in a low profile.
2. 他这人一直很低调。
Tā zhè rén yìzhí hěn dīdiào.
He always keeps a low profile.

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第一章：汉语十大生活流行词汇

4. 你懂的(nǐdǒng de) You know.

The expression "你懂的 (nǐdǒng de)" was translated from the English expression "you know." Its popularization is due to a video "Old Boy," made by the Chopsticks Brothers. It's a story about two middle-aged friends who combine their talents they learned in middle school to participate in a sort of "China's Got Talent" competition. In the video, the expression "你懂的 (nǐdǒng de)" expresses an acknowledgment of their shared nostalgia of youth. Ever since then, "你懂的 (nǐdǒng de)" has become a popular expression when two people share a mutual comprehension of a time or feeling. The phrase simply means, "you really do understand," mixed with the French mood of "c'est la vie!"

Nowadays, the saying is frequently used to assure an understanding between two people in conversation. Next time you find yourself in a situation where details aren't convenient to say out loud, a simple "你懂的 (nǐdǒng de)" conveys "you understand what I'm talking about."

Examples

1. Tom: Mike, 你怎么和 Mary 在一起了?

Mike, nǐ zěnmē hé Mary zài yìqǐ le?

Mike, how come you are now with Mary?

Mike: 小点儿声, 你懂的... ..

Xiǎodiǎnr shēng, nǐ dǒng de...

Keep it down, you know what's been going on...

2. Lily: 怎么了? 愁眉苦脸的。

Zěnmē le? Chóuméikǔliǎn de.

What's wrong? Why such a long face?

Lucy: 我忘记准备老板要的文件了, 结果...你懂的。

Wǒ wàngjì zhǔnbèi lǎobǎn yào de wénjiàn le, jiéguǒ... Nǐ dǒng de.

I forgot to prepare the documents for my boss, so now...well, you know what'll happen.

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第一章：汉语十大生活流行词汇

5. 拍马屁(pāimǎpì) Kiss up to someone

Origin

In Yuan Dynasty, herders took great pride in raising horses. When horse herders encountered one another, they would often pat the buttocks of the other's horse and say, "What a good horse!" to fawn on the owner of the horse. At first, people only praised truly good horses, but soon people began to do so to flatter others, regardless of whether the herder's horse was good or bad, strong or weak. This action became known as "拍马屁(pāimǎpì)."

Usage

Literally, "拍马屁(pāimǎpì)" refers to patting a horse's buttocks: "拍(pāi)" means to pat, "马(mǎ)" is horse, and "屁(pì)" refers to fart or buttocks. But now "拍马屁(pāimǎpì)" is widely used as an analogy to ridicule blatant flattery that is meant to please others without regard for objective reality. Consequently, people who like to kiss up are called "马屁精(mǎpìjīng)."

Examples

1. 这家伙是拍马屁的好手，总能让上司高兴！
Zhè jiāhuo shì pāimǎpì de hǎoshǒu, zǒng néng ràng shàngsī gāoxìng!
This guy is an expert at kissing up, always pleasing his authorities!
2. 他善于拍马屁，所以升迁很快。
Tā shànyú pāimǎpì, suǒyǐ shēngqiān hěn kuài.
He is good at kissing up, so he gets promoted very quickly.

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Chapter One: Top Ten Popular Daily Chinese Words

第一章：汉语十大生活流行词汇

6. 心塞(xīnsāi) Feel crushed

Meaning and Usage

“心塞(xīnsāi)” has become a popular buzzword these days. Here “心(xīn)” is “heart” and “塞(sāi)” means blocked or plugged, so put together, “心塞(xīnsāi)” is used to vividly describe a kind of emotion in which your heart seems to be suffocated or blocked up and uncomfortable. If something goes wrong and you are left feeling helpless or speechless, you can say that you feel “心塞(xīnsāi)”.

For example, your mood could be described as “心塞(xīnsāi)” when the weekend finally comes and you have big, exciting plans, but it ends up pouring down rain and you’ve no choice but to cancel. Or you are all dressed up for your date but a car drives through a puddle and splashes mud all over you. Your feeling at that moment is “心塞(xīnsāi).” Or your boss remarks that your proposal, for which you have stayed up working on for several nights, is of no use, so your frustration can also be described as “心塞(xīnsāi)”.

Examples

1. 我男朋友说我做的饭很难吃，心塞！
Wǒ nán péngyou shuō wǒ zuò de fàn hěn nán chī, xīnsāi!
My boyfriend said my cooking is terrible, so I feel horrible!
2. 这个周末又要加班，好心塞啊！
Zhège zhōumò yòu yào jiābān, hǎo xīnsāi ā!
It sucks! I have to work again this weekend!

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第一章：汉语十大生活流行词汇

7. 靠谱(kàopǔ) Reliable/To be trusted

Origin and Usage

“靠谱(kàopǔ)” originated from northern China and means reliable and to be trusted. When you pronounce it, you can add 儿(ér) at the end of “谱(pǔ),” just like “靠谱儿(kàopǔr).” If you say that something is “靠谱儿(kàopǔr),” that means it is feasible and possible. The opposite is “不靠谱儿(bú kàopǔr)” which means that something is digressing from the subject, straying from the point or is unpractical. “靠(kào)” means to rely on. “谱(pǔ)” means music scores literally, but here it refers to feasibility and rationality.

Examples

1. 你这人真不靠谱儿!
Nǐ zhè rén zhēn bú kàopǔr!
You're so unreliable!
2. 这件事一点都不靠谱儿，估计不好办。
Zhè jiàn shì yì diǎn dōu bú kàopǔr, gūjì bù hǎo bàn.
This isn't feasible at all. I'm afraid that it will be difficult to do.

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第一章：汉语十大生活流行词汇

8. 晒(shài) Show and share

Meaning and Usage

Well, summer is here, the hottest time of the year. Do you feel burned by the sun? We do! But we always try to use sun protection. In Chinese, "晒 (shài)" means "to sun" or "to shine." "晒太阳 (shài tàiyang)" means "to bask in the sun." Most people who bask in the sun this year will use some sort of sun protection, which is called "防晒 (fángshài)." "防 (fáng)" means "to prevent" or "to guard against."

But "晒 (shài)" also has another more modern meaning; it can also mean "to show" or "to share." The internet is a great source of information, and it can also be a platform for creativity. One example is that people have now begun to add new meanings to words. Nowadays, people like to use "晒 (shài)" to mean "to demonstrate special skills" and "to share wonderful life experiences with others," or even "to flaunt something they are proud of." Just look at these examples of the most recent uses of "晒 (shài)" on the internet: "晒工资 (shài gōngzī)" means "to divulge one's salary," "晒幸福 (shài xìngfú)" means "to show happiness," and "晒照片 (shài zhàopiàn)" means "to share pictures."

Examples

1. 大家都喜欢在网上晒照片。

Dàjiā dōu xǐhuan zài wǎngshàng shài zhàopiàn.

We all like to share and show our pictures online.

2. 现在的明星都喜欢在微博上晒幸福。

Xiànzài de míngxīng dōu xǐhuan zài wēibó shàng shài xìngfú.

These days, celebrities like to use micro-blogs to share and show their happiness.

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第一章：汉语十大生活流行词汇

9. 拼 (Pīn) To Put Together or to Unite

Meaning and Usage

“拼 (pīn)” originally means to put together or to unite. Recently, “拼 (pīn)” means that people work together to accomplish certain objectives. For instance, some popular daily Chinese words starting with “拼 (pīn)” appeared.

拼车 (pīnchē) means “carpool,” where 车 means car.

拼游 (pīnyóu) means “to travel together,” where 游 means to travel.

拼吃 (pīnchī) means “to eat together,” where 吃 means to eat.

拼住 (pīnzhù) means “share a room,” where 住 means to live.

Examples

A: 嗨，你也在人民路上班吗？我经常见你 步行去那儿呢。

Hēi, nǐ yě zài Rénmínlù shàngbān ma? Wǒ jīngcháng jiàn nǐ bùxíng qù nàr ne.

Hi, do you work on Renmin Road? I often saw you go there on foot.

B: 是呀，我刚搬来这儿不久，还没有找到合适拼车的人。

Shì ya, wǒ gāng bān lái zhèr bùjiǔ, hái méiyǒu zhǎo dào héshì pīnchē de rén.

Yes, I just moved here recently, and I haven't found the right person to carpool with.

A: 那你愿意和我拼车吗？我也在人民路上班。

Nà nǐ yuànyìhé wǒ pīnchē ma? Wǒ yě zài Rénmínlù shàngbān.

Are you willing to carpool with me? I also work on Renmin Road.

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第一章：汉语十大生活流行词汇

10. 给力 (gěilì) Cool/Great

Origin

"给力 (gěilì)" was probably one of the most "流行 (liúxíng) popular" new phrases in the Chinese language in 2010. It is an expression deriving from the Manlam dialect and it means "awesome" or "very good."

It spread widely during the period of 2010 World Cup because it expresses excitement of the soccer fans. If we choose words from modern English to explain the expression, "awesome," "cool," and "exciting" are suitable choices. Foreign media sometimes translate it literally as "giving power." Interestingly, it was not "给力" but it was the antonym "不给力 (bù gěilì)" that was popular on the Internet at first.

In fact, "给力" is an ancient word in the Chinese language. It describes how government authorities used to pay for their officials with servants. More specifically, the royal government gave different officials different numbers of servants depending on the rank of the officials. These servants provided free household services or worked in the fields for the officials.

Example

1. A: 昨天晚上你看 NBA 比赛了吗?

Zuótiān wǎnshàng nǐ kàn NBA bǐsài le ma?

Did you watch the NBA game last night?

B: 当然。湖人队太给力了。

Dāngrán. Húrén duì tài gěilì le.

Of course. The L.A. Lakers was great!

2. 这个游戏一点儿都不给力。

Zhège yóuxì yídiǎnr dōu bù gěilì.

This game is not cool at all.

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Chapter Two: Top Ten Popular Chinese Words on Internet

第二章：汉语十大网络流行词汇

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