

# The Magic Words

Karen in America

By Karen Zhang



你知道“magic words”是什么吗？在日常生活中，这些神奇的词语能够拉近亲人、朋友、同事甚至是陌生人之间的距离，产生微妙的化学反应。究竟有哪些“magic words”呢？就让我们一起来看看Karen是怎么说的吧。

Do you know what the magic words are in America?

Let me begin with a scene I saw in a restaurant in Pittsburgh. A mother and her little boy came into the restaurant. After they ordered, a waitress named Sally brought them drinks, including a glass of orange juice for the boy. Noticing her son was quiet, the mother prompted<sup>[提示]</sup> him, “Honey, what are those magic words?”

“Thank you,” the boy said in a low voice, holding the glass to his lips.

“Not yet,” the mother said. “Please put down your glass and speak louder to Sally.”

“Thank you,” the boy said again. This time

was much clearer.

The response lightened up the waitress. She said, “You’re very welcome. Enjoy!”

I still did not know what the phrase, “magic words”, meant. Then one day, my American teacher happened to mention how she taught her five-year-old son at home. She said, “I make sure my little one remembers those magic words. I tell him that words like please and thank you can work wonders in our daily life.”

In fact, these polite expressions are used every day in America—among strangers, between friends or with family. At first, I was surprised to hear passengers saying “thank you” to a bus driver when they disembarked<sup>[下车]</sup>; customers saying “thank you” after they are served in a bank, in a store or in a restaurant. I was even more surprised to hear American parents saying “please” and “thank you” to their children. I don’t remember saying and hearing so many magic words in China.

The person who says the magic words conveys a message of courtesy<sup>[礼貌]</sup>; the one who receives them will feel delighted to be appreciated. Now I carry the magic words every day, saying them to people I know or to those I don’t know. Several times a day, thank you just slips out of my mouth into a conversation where it doesn’t belong. But I think even though it’s an incorrect response, it lightens others’ day, doesn’t it? 🗣️

