

# Most Famous American Proverbs with Meanings and Explanations

## **Absence makes the heart grow fonder**

The phrase means that the absence of a person or a thing increases our love for it. The feelings of love and affection for it gets intensified with distance. We tend to miss and have intense feelings for someone when they are not around us. There is an increasing likability for a person or a thing when it goes out of reach or is lost. It is that separation with the person or thing increases its value in the heart and becomes fonder.

## **Better late than never**

Doing something belatedly is always better than not doing it at all. The proverb also has a deeper meaning implying that we need to appreciate things and opportunities that we get ahead of the expected time. This means when something happens in an unexpected moment is always worth the wait than the regret of not happening.

## **Actions speak louder than words**

It is an age-old proverb stressing the fact that saying something and doing something are two different things. A person who backs his words with actions is better than one who is empty rhetoric. Actions of a person are much more valuable than what he says. The real intention of people is most often recognized through the things they do rather than for the words they speak.

## **Better safe than sorry**

It is always wise to be safe than regret for not staying protected. In life, we need to be careful and defend ourselves from risks and harms or else, we will only repent for our actions. That is why it is said, instead of acting recklessly and suffering the consequences, it is good to be cautious in our choices and actions so that we do not be sorry for it.

### **Money is the root of all evil**

This popular phrase denotes the evils that love for money can bring. Literally, money and all forms of worldly wealth can distort a person's sense of values and lead to many kinds of evil. The evil things in the world are often because of the love for money or the greed of man to acquire more money. The desire of man to obtain and amass money becomes the root cause for many evils and that is what this biblical phrase means.

### **Curiosity killed the cat**

It is a well-known proverb used to warn the risks of indulging in the unnecessary investigation. Being inquisitive or curious about other people's affairs or everything around may get you into trouble. It is also used as an idiom to tell someone not to try unwanted experiments all because they are curious to know everything. Curiosity in life can take the form of prying, hacking, or being nosy into someone's life, which can ultimately lead to distress and trouble.

### **Necessity is the mother of invention**

The problem means that the need for something is the driving force to invent something. Among everything that was so far invented by mankind, necessity is the first cause of innovation. Only when there is a problem, it encourages innovators to find a solution. An extreme need for something is what forces humans to look for alternative ways and innovations to achieve it.

### **Don't count your chickens before they hatch**

This proverb has deeper meaning implying the uncertainty of the future. It tends to say about the potential risk of overthinking about the happenings of the future that is unpredictable. Planning based on assumptions is not a good idea. We should not plan everything before it happens because not all hopes will always materialize. We should instead wait for the moment to take decisions. It describes how we can avoid disappointments in life by waiting for the result to happen, instead of hoping too early and making future plans.

### **Don't put all the eggs in one basket**

The phrase is relevant to many life issues, meaning that it is not a good idea to risk everything all at once. We should always decentralize all our efforts and resources so that we don't end up losing all. In regard to money, opportunity or hopes, relying too much on one thing can lead to disappointment and loss, if ever it doesn't happen. This proverb is also a piece of advice about an investment. In life's financial decisions, we should never put all our savings or money into one investment. Because, if any mishap happens, we will lose everything.

### **The early bird gets the worm**

The proverb tells us the importance of acting early to be successful. It can literally mean that waking up early gets success. But it also has a deeper meaning implying that if we do something ahead of others, we will always be at an advantage. Indeed, first come, first served. The proverb signifies about punctuality and how acting right on time will lead to success in life. Procrastinating leads to chaos and you will have to struggle to complete tasks at the last minute.

### **Nothing ventured, nothing gained**

This is also a different version of the phrase, 'no pains no gain'. Only when we set out to do something we will gain something. Without coming out of our comfort zone and venturing into the world, we will not reach our destination. Anything from money, or job, to business and successful life, requires us to first venture out with our talents and show how much we are capable of. Only then we will gain the benefits out of it. Success is not a piece of cake and you can't expect it to come to your hands without taking any risks.

### **A friend in need is a friend indeed**

The proverb talks about the most valuable characteristic of a friend. A true friend will stay by your side, through all thick and thin. Whatever problem you are facing, a friend will give a helping hand. One who avoids you when you are in real need was never a friend to you. Those people who are sticking to you during your good times can only be identified as a good friend in tough times. A true friend will always help and support you, no matter your situation.

### **Give Someone an Inch and They'll Take a Mile**

The phrase literally means that when we start helping someone in any way, they will start expecting more of the same in the future. However, in a deeper sense, it can mean giving away anything such as power or freedom to someone will make them get a lot more of it from you sooner. Yielding even a little amount of money or wealth can make them ask for more and you will be taken advantage of.

### **Honesty is the best policy**

The proverb means the importance of honesty in life. We always have to be honest and true to yourself and others, even during the worst of all situations. Honesty is regarded as the best tool to achieve success. In family and relationships, honesty is the backbone that binds everyone together. Without it, we will lose trust with our near and dear ones and it will lead to the end of the relationships. Indeed, honesty builds one's character and personality, which helps you sustain your success forever.

### **All is well that ends well**

All is well that ends well is a phrase that means that one should not worry about the present mishaps or difficulties as everything will end well. The phrase is used to mention why a person should forget the unpleasant things in life but look forward to the ending that will be of only good things. It implies that if something does not feel good now, then it is probably not the end. The phrase is based on the notion that all things end up only in a good way. All the problems and pitfalls in life are often justified when everything turns out well and good. Alternatively, All Is Well That Ends Well is a comedy literature by William Shakespeare.

### **All is fair in love and war**

All is fair in love and war is a phrase used to describe a situation in which someone's actions are justified, even when it is unfair. It is a proverbial saying that expresses the idea of justification of unfair things for the underlying cause. The concept behind the phrase is that somethings in life are so important that people act on their own best interest, even if it seems unfair to others. For instance, in war, killing and bombing are considered fair than in normal life. The same is with love. People go to the extreme to get what they love and their 'fair game' cannot be justified from others' points of view. In a nutshell, anything is acceptable and fair depending on the situation.

### **Blood is thicker than water**

Blood is thicker than water is an English proverb that means family relationships are always stronger than other relationships. Persons with blood ties always have a stronger connection than with people who do not share it. The proverb implies that only with blood-related connection there will be more trust and closeness with each other. The bond between friends and lovers can get disconnected when trouble arises, but blood connections cannot be divided. It means that blood relationships will stay with us through all thick and thin while others don't.

### **Close, but no cigar**

'Close, but no cigar' is a common phrase used to mention about someone getting too close to winning but failed to do it. It was commonly used during early carnivals and the expression became popular to be used for those who were near to winning a prize but didn't. The idiom represents a person who got very close to accomplishing something only to fall short at the end. It is often told by someone who didn't get the desired outcome or has nothing else to show for the effort he had put in. so, the phrase was used as a mention of how close he came near to the goal, but not completely.

### **Crime doesn't pay**

The proverbial saying 'crime doesn't pay' is used to mention that any crime we do brings more trouble than benefit. Every crime has a consequence and that consequence is the punishment rather than the profit for which it was done. An alternative meaning of this phrase is that any crime or illegal activity is done for the benefit of money will not give the benefit in the long run. Which means, it can be tempting to earn money, but you will certainly get caught for the crime done. This Victorian age-old saying was meant to encourage morality and work ethics.

### **Easy come easy go**

Easy come easy go is commonly used as a phrase to tell that anything which comes easily will go off easily. It is used to indicate that any relationship or possession that is acquired without much effort may get lost or abandoned and we should not regret it. For instance, money that is easily earned as a bribe will be lost or spent easily as an unwanted expense. The idea behind it is that if something is easily accomplished or gained, it can also be easily lost. It also means that we need not regret or worry about the lost things that are not earned hard.

### **Every dog has its day**

'Every dog has its day' is a phrase that means everyone, either rich or poor, has a moment of glory. The expression is used as a way to mention how each person has his own timing to revenge or avenge on those who had wronged them. Everyone, despite their status, will get an opportunity to avenge for the things done to them. Life is a roller coaster and anything can happen to anyone to get them move forward to a status of honor or glorification. The phrase overtly emphasizes that all people will become successful at some point of time in their lives, and we need to accept it, no matter what.

### **Early to bed early to rise makes a man healthy wealthy and wise**

This is a quote from Benjamin Franklin, viewed as a commonsensical proverb that tells the necessities for becoming successful. The saying emphasizes that those who work hard and take enough rest will become healthy, wise, and wealthy. It means that having enough sleep and not being lazy are important things that will make a man succeed in his life. The expression is often used as a means of encouraging people to do hard and diligent work, while taking care of their health. The phrase also emphasizes the importance of time and hard work.

### **It Takes Two to Tango**

It Takes Two to Tango is a phrase used under circumstances where we need two participants to complete the activity. In life, you cannot always do everything all by yourself, and you need to people as co-participants all through the life. The phrase mentions the importance of fellow humans in each one's life. It emphasizes that, whether it is love or fight, there are always two parties involved and that partnership is what makes up the conflict or the relationship.

### **Every grey cloud has a silver lining**

The proverb literally means that even when the cloud is all grey, there exists a silver lining. This means that no bad situation is permanent and there is always hope, that something good is arriving at the farther corner of life. We should never feel hopeless in life, as every difficult moment brings with it the possibility of good moments in the future. Even a grey cloud will have the sun behind it, which is visible through its 'silver lining'. Likewise, life will turn good for everyone and will lead to better days. That's why it is said difficult times are like passing clouds; it might block the sun but once the right moment arrives, the cloud leaves way for a brighter day.

### **If at first, you don't succeed, try try again**

The phrase means that one should always try until they succeed. You should never give up on things once we encounter failure or set back. Because failure is the stepping stone to success. We should try and try again until we achieve the goal. The phrase emphasizes the importance of persistence and perseverance to reach out for one's goals. Not everyone will succeed at the very first attempt, but we need to continue to keep on trying after the failure. The phrase is commonly used to encourage persons to not stop at the initial failure but try hard in the next attempts until success is achieved.

### **Let bygones be bygones**

'Let bygones be bygones' means that we need to move past the regrets and offenses in life. It is important that we stop focusing on the past conflicts and sources of tension so that we can move on to the next level. We have to forget whatever that had happened in the past and stop worrying about the past errors or grievances. It also means that we have to forgive others who have wronged us, forgetting the arguments and problems so that we can focus on improving the relationship. The phrase emphasizes the importance of overcoming regretful incidents and the need for reconciliation.

### **The neck of the woods**

Neck of the woods is a phrase used to represent the specific area in which someone lived or where someone grew up. It can represent anything from a neighborhood, or a city, to a culture.

### **Not out of the woods yet**

The phrase means that something or someone is still not out of their trouble. If we say someone is 'not out of the woods yet', it can mean that they are trying to come out of their difficulties but are still not completely out of it. It captures the meaning that they are likely to prevail the difficulty or recover over trouble sooner or later but still are under the same circumstances. Despite all the improvements going on, they are still not completely free from their threat or difficulties. The phrase is often used in reference to someone's health condition or financial situation.

### **Practice makes perfect**

The phrase is commonly used to imply that regular practice of anything makes you proficient in it. Whether it is any activity, skill, or behavior, with regular practice, you can become a perfectionist in that area. The phrase is used to encourage someone to do something regularly so that they can become well-versed in it. If it is an activity or skill, when you continue to do it repeated times, you can learn to do it very well. Anything from sports to hobbies, when we have regular and repeated practice of it, it will help you become skillful at it. Doing something over and over again will eventually make you do it perfectly.

### **Practice what you preach**

This is a common phrase used to target those who give advice without practicing it on their own lives. Most people are ready to suggest others on what to do and what not to do, but they fail to practice the same in their life. So, before we preach others to do something, we ourselves need to practice it. We have to behave in the way we tell others to behave to us. The phrase implies that it can be too easy to say something in words than to actually follow through it. So, if you are going to say something to someone, better learn to follow it before you preach it.

### **Seeing is believing**

'Seeing is believing' means we often have to look into things keenly before believing. It is always good to believe after seeing it with our eyes than to believe after hearing. It would be the right attitude in many situations when we come across a rumor or even a scandal. We should not believe anything until we see it or analyze about it. If we have not seen it, it is better to keep quiet about it as it can lead to more gossips. It is always best that we always see something to know if it is real or not. So, we should avoid believing anything from just hearing but wait to see it and only then believe. This way, we get the grasp of the version of reality with what we see.

### **Beggars can't be choosers**

The proverb 'beggars can't be choosers' literally means that if you are begging for something, you do not have any choice but to accept what is given. It is commonly used in regards to charity done such that when a person gets something as a donation, he does not have the right to make a choice. He has to accept what is given without questioning or demanding. In other words, when someone requests or receives anything for free, they should not ask for the quality or quantity of it. There is no sense in asking for more or customizing the things that we ask for as a contribution from someone. The phrase is also used to insult or demean someone who is ungrateful of what they get.

### **The shoe is on the other foot.**

The phrase 'The shoe is on the other foot' means that a situation has been reversed and is just the opposite of what it was before. The person who was at the disadvantaged end is now having the advantage. The phrase means a sudden change that has lifted a situation upside-down. It also represents the discomfort caused by the change of the situation. In life, things can get a drastic change, bringing power at the hands of those who were in the less privileged position earlier.

### **Take it with a grain of salt**

The phrase means that we need to understand every situation with skepticism. Oftentimes, there are possibilities of things being exaggerated so it is not necessary to believe it completely. Do not believe anything said exactly as it is and better not take it seriously. There is no rule that what they said would be entirely true or correct. Instead of investigating or arguing against it, it is better to accept it as a grain of salt in the food.

### **Shrug it off**

This phrasal verb 'shrug it off' means that you can ignore things that is bad for you or simply unimportant. If you shrug something off, it means that you decide to look past the criticism and didn't take it much seriously. It also means to treat someone as if they are not important. During problems, it is better to ignore them than to let it slump you.

### **Let comments go in one ear and out the other**

The phrase states that we need to take things in a light manner, leaving gossips behind. If someone lets something go in one ear and out the other, it means that they are quick to forget things and move on. The phrase also has a meaning that you are not listening to something and so you don't understand. It represents not paying attention to something that is said.

### **There are plenty of other fishes in the sea.**

The phrase symbolically means not to cry over things that are missed as there are plenty of opportunities around. It is often used to mention in situations where the relationship has ended, meaning that there are so many other people to have relationship with.

### **There's more than one way to skin a cat.**

The proverb means that there are different ways to achieve a goal. It is you who have to choose the way that rightly fits you to do something. There are always many paths one can take to get to the place they want. All the ways will reach the same end but choosing the path matters. Literally, the proverb means killing a cat for its skin. The proverb is used in situation where we have to do something gruesome to get the benefit. Usually, it is used to represent money-making that has lot of ways to be done.

### **To kill two birds with one stone.**

The phrase means accomplishing two goals in one deed. When someone has completed, achieved, or taken care of two tasks at once with a single action, they are said to have killed two birds with one stone. It typically represents solving two problems or handling two situations with one action or solution. It means resolving two different things from a single effort.

### **Variety is the spice of life.**

The phrase means that differences in life is what makes it more interesting. In world, there are so many different people with differences in opinions and character leading to new and exciting experiences. And that is what makes the world an intriguing place to live in. variety in everything, whether it is food, people, or experiences, will spice up one's life. The proverb emphasizes that doing different things or having different kind of people with us will make the moment more exciting. Actually, life become fascinating, when it changes repeatedly with lots of different types of experiences.

### **A watched pot never boils.**

The proverb stresses the importance of being patient. If we wait for something to happen, it will probably never happen. Waiting makes us impatient and the time slows down taking longer than usual. The proverb refers to how the time gets elongated when someone is expecting for something to happen urgently. This is why we need to stay patient and let the thing happen in its own timing. When we are desperate for something to happen we keep on having an eye on it, thus making us feel like it is going to take forever to actually occur.

### **We'll cross that bridge when we come/get to it.**

It is typically a kind of advice stating we should face the problem when it arises. The phrase is used in situations when we need to face the immediate problem rather than getting ready for something that is yet to arrive. Somethings in life will not be going well and there will be lot of matters to look over. It is at those moments you need to know what to prioritize and what not to. The phrase mentions the need for looking into the most urgent matters at hand than to think of any impending or yet to occur problem. It also has a hidden meaning of postponing our worries for the time when it actually arrives.

**When it rains, it pours.**

The proverb means that when something happens, it happens with great intensity and frequency. The phrase is often used in a negative connotation to denote unfair situations that happens within short frequency. It implies that when something bad occurs, other bad situations will accompany it at the same time. When troubles comes, they don't come as single but arises one after the other, leaving everyone in distress.

**When the cat's away, the mice will play.**

This rhythmic proverb means that when there is no authority power to supervise, everyone will take advantage of the situation. People will naturally begin their mischief as soon as the one in the authority power is gone. The proverb literally means the excitement of the mice when cat is away. Similarly, people will engage in lazy behavior or entertaining activities in the absence of supervision. For instance, when a teacher leaves the room, students start their fun.

**Where there's a will, there's a way.**

This is a very common proverb that means, if we have the willpower to do something, we will find a way to do it. Only when something is desired enough, we get that persistence and conscious intention to work on it. People who have the determination to reach their aim, they will probably find the means to achieve it. The proverb emphasizes the importance of will power and strong determination in life to reach for their aspirations. Moreover, the proverb is also used to denote the will power to face problems and find a way to resolve them. Strong will power will lead to hard work and dedication, which will in turn bring success in life

**You can't judge a book by its cover.**

The proverb means that you cannot judge something by the way it looks on the outside. Outward appearances can never determine the worth of something. It cannot be an indicator of the quality and value of something. You can never know the real worth of someone or something just by looking at the person or thing's appearance. We cannot judge a worthless book by its attractive cover. The same is with people. The quality or character of someone should only be judged by deeply looking into their real value. The proverb implies that appearances can be deceptive and we cannot come to a conclusion solely by looking at someone or something on the surface.

**You can't teach an old dog new tricks.**

The proverb means that old people are not able to grasp new ideas or learn new skills. It also has a deeper meaning implying that anyone who is accustomed to any old habit is not capable of breaking it and learn something new. It is difficult for them to break their old pattern of behavior and transform to a new one. We cannot change others and their old habits, as they will be least interested in catching it. It will be really difficult and nearly impossible for someone who has spent many years in bad habits to come to the righteous path.

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Thank you.