



American Expression E0150 Can't make heads or tails of

IOTS Publishing Team
International Online Teachers Society
Since 2011

The expression "can't make heads or tails of" is used to describe a situation or information that is confusing, unclear, or difficult to understand. It implies that the subject matter or task at hand is so perplexing that it is impossible to discern any meaningful or coherent interpretation.

The phrase originates from the practice of flipping a coin to make a decision. In a traditional coin flip, one side is typically marked with the head of a prominent figure, such as a president or a monarch, while the other side depicts a tail or an emblem. When someone says they "can't make heads or tails of" something, they are essentially saying that they are unable to determine which side of the coin is facing up, and therefore cannot discern any meaningful information or conclusion.

The expression is commonly used in situations where information or instructions are complex or ambiguous, making it challenging to comprehend or follow. It can refer to a variety of scenarios, such as trying to decipher a complicated puzzle, understanding a convoluted piece of writing, or comprehending a complex scientific concept.

When someone uses this expression, they are conveying their frustration or confusion regarding the subject matter. It suggests that despite their efforts to understand or interpret the information, they are unable to find any clarity or meaning.

In some cases, the phrase may also imply that the information or situation is intentionally confusing or obscure. This can be seen when someone deliberately presents information in a convoluted or obfuscated manner to create confusion or mislead others.

The expression "can't make heads or tails of" is not limited to intellectual or cognitive challenges. It can also be used to describe situations where someone is unable to navigate through a physical space or comprehend a complex set of instructions. For example, a person might say they "can't make heads or tails of" a complicated map or a set of assembly instructions for a product.

In summary, the phrase "can't make heads or tails of" is a figurative expression used to convey confusion, frustration, or difficulty in understanding a situation, information, or instructions. It suggests that the subject matter is so perplexing or unclear that it is impossible to discern any meaningful interpretation or conclusion.

Questions for Discussion

1. Have you ever encountered a situation where you couldn't make heads or tails of the information or instructions provided? How did you handle it, and what steps did you take to gain clarity?
 2. In what areas of your life do you commonly experience difficulty in making heads or tails of things? Is there a particular subject, task, or type of information that tends to be more confusing for you? How do you approach these situations?
 3. Can you think of any strategies or techniques that have helped you in the past when you couldn't make heads or tails of something? How do you approach complex or confusing information to make it more understandable and manageable?
 4. How do you react when you encounter situations or information that you can't make heads or tails of? Do you feel frustrated, curious, or motivated to seek further understanding? How does your response impact your ability to navigate through the confusion?
 5. Have you ever been in a situation where you had to explain something to someone, but they couldn't make heads or tails of it? How did you adapt your approach to help them understand? What strategies did you find effective in breaking down complex concepts or information to make it more accessible to others?
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