



American Expression E0170 Close but no cigar

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The phrase "close but no cigar" is a popular idiom that conveys the idea of coming very close to achieving a goal or success but ultimately falling short. It is often used to express disappointment or frustration when someone's efforts or actions were almost successful but did not quite reach the desired outcome.

The origin of the phrase can be traced back to carnival games and fairs, where cigars were often offered as prizes. In these games, participants would engage in various challenges or tests of skill, hoping to win a cigar as a reward. If someone came close to winning but did not meet the required criteria or fell short of the target, they would not receive a cigar as a prize. Hence, the expression "close but no cigar" emerged as a way to highlight the nearness of success while acknowledging its ultimate absence.

In modern usage, "close but no cigar" is employed in a wide range of contexts. It can refer to any situation where someone's efforts or performance were commendable, but the final result did not meet the desired standard. It is often used playfully or lightheartedly to soften the disappointment and add a touch of humor to the situation.

The phrase is not limited to actual prizes or competitions but is also used metaphorically to describe any endeavor where the outcome falls just short of the intended target. For example, it can be used in sports to describe a near miss, such as a shot that narrowly misses the goal or a runner who finishes just behind the winner. Similarly, in academic or professional settings, it can be used to describe a high-scoring exam or an impressive presentation that did not earn the top grade or secure the desired promotion.

"Close but no cigar" highlights the importance of recognizing and appreciating effort and progress even when the final result is not achieved. It acknowledges that success often requires persistence, improvement, or additional steps. It encourages individuals to learn from their near misses, keep striving, and maintain a positive mindset despite falling short of the intended goal.

While the phrase can be seen as a form of encouragement to continue striving for success, it is important to balance its use with empathy and sensitivity. Recognizing someone's efforts while acknowledging their disappointment can help maintain a supportive and motivating environment.

In conclusion, the idiom "close but no cigar" represents the idea of coming close to achieving a goal or success but ultimately falling short. It originated from carnival games where cigars were offered as prizes. The phrase is now widely used in various contexts to express disappointment when someone's efforts were commendable but did not meet the desired outcome. It emphasizes the importance of recognizing effort and progress, encourages perseverance, and maintains a positive mindset in the face of near misses.

#### Questions for Discussion

1. Have you ever experienced a situation where you came close to achieving a goal but fell short? How did you handle the disappointment, and what did you learn from the experience?
  2. How do you think the phrase "close but no cigar" affects our perception of success and failure? Does it provide motivation to keep trying or create a sense of frustration and discouragement?
  3. Can you think of any famous examples from sports, entertainment, or other fields where individuals or teams came close to achieving a significant milestone but fell short? What lessons can we draw from their experiences?
  4. In what ways can the concept of "close but no cigar" be applied to personal or professional growth? How can we use near misses as opportunities for learning, improvement, and resilience?
  5. Are there any potential downsides or limitations to using the phrase "close but no cigar" in our interactions with others? How can we strike a balance between acknowledging someone's effort while being mindful of their disappointment or frustration?
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