



American Expression E0382 Have the upper hand

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The phrase "have the upper hand" is an idiomatic expression used to describe a situation where one person or party has a clear advantage or superior position over others involved in a particular context. It implies having control, influence, or power that gives someone an advantageous position in a given situation.

When someone "has the upper hand," they hold the dominant position, whether it's in a negotiation, competition, conflict, or any other interaction. This advantage can manifest in various ways, such as having more information, resources, skills, or leverage over others involved. It represents a position of strength and control, often leading to a higher likelihood of success or achieving desired outcomes.

The origin of this phrase can be traced back to the world of sports, particularly in activities like boxing or wrestling. In these physical contests, gaining the upper hand means being in a position of control and dominance over the opponent. It refers to having a superior position or advantage that increases the likelihood of winning.

In a broader sense, the expression is also used in everyday language to describe situations beyond the realm of sports. For example, in business negotiations, if one party has more information or holds a stronger position, they are said to have the upper hand. This advantage can stem from factors like market knowledge, bargaining power, or the ability to influence the outcome to their favor.

Having the upper hand can also be relevant in interpersonal relationships. In conflicts or disagreements, the person who possesses more persuasive skills, emotional intelligence, or the ability to assert their position effectively may have the upper hand. It can also relate to situations where one person has more social status, authority, or control over others, allowing them to exert influence or make decisions that impact the dynamics of the relationship.

However, it is essential to note that having the upper hand does not guarantee a positive outcome or long-term success. The advantage may be temporary, and circumstances can change. It is crucial to handle the upper hand responsibly and ethically, as using it to exploit or manipulate others can lead to negative consequences and strained relationships.

In conclusion, the phrase "have the upper hand" refers to having a clear advantage, control, or dominant position in a given situation. It signifies possessing superior resources, skills, information, or leverage over others involved. Originating from the world of sports, the expression has extended into various domains of life, including business and interpersonal relationships. However, it is important to exercise this advantage responsibly and ethically, as it does not guarantee long-term success and can have negative consequences if misused.

Questions for Discussion

1. In what situations do you believe it is more advantageous to have the upper hand, and why?
2. Can having the upper hand in a negotiation or conflict be achieved without negatively impacting relationships or compromising ethical standards?
3. How does the concept of having the upper hand impact power dynamics in personal relationships? Is it healthy or detrimental?
4. Can someone maintain the upper hand indefinitely, or is it a temporary advantage that can shift over time?
5. Are there any strategies or tactics that can be employed to gain the upper hand in a competitive situation while still fostering collaboration and maintaining positive relationships?