



American Expression E0396 He's got bigger fish to fry

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The expression "He's got bigger fish to fry" is an idiomatic phrase used to convey that someone has more important or pressing matters to attend to, often implying that they have little interest or time for a particular issue or task at hand. It suggests that the person in question is preoccupied with more significant responsibilities or concerns.

The origin of this phrase can be traced back to fishing as a metaphor. In fishing, catching larger fish is generally considered more valuable or worthwhile than catching smaller ones. Therefore, the expression "bigger fish to fry" emerged as a way to prioritize one's activities based on their relative importance or significance.

When someone says, "He's got bigger fish to fry," it implies that the person mentioned has more important tasks or concerns that require their attention and effort. It suggests that the current situation or request being made is relatively trivial or less important in comparison to their other obligations or priorities.

The phrase is often used to politely decline an invitation, request, or opportunity when someone is genuinely occupied with more pressing matters. It conveys the notion that the person's time and energy are limited and need to be directed towards more significant responsibilities.

For example, if a colleague asks for assistance with a project, and you respond by saying, "Sorry, I can't help you right now. I've got bigger fish to fry," you are indicating that you have more important tasks or commitments that require your immediate attention.

The expression "bigger fish to fry" can also be used to highlight the notion of prioritization in various contexts. It underscores the need to focus on tasks or issues that have a greater impact or consequence, rather than getting caught up in trivial or less meaningful concerns.

In summary, "He's got bigger fish to fry" is an idiomatic expression that suggests someone has more important matters or responsibilities to attend to. It conveys the idea of prioritization and indicates that the current situation or task is of lesser significance in comparison. Whether declining an invitation or highlighting the need for focus on more crucial matters, this phrase emphasizes the limited time and attention individuals have, prompting them to prioritize their actions based on importance and impact.

Questions for Discussion

1. Have you ever found yourself using the phrase "He's got bigger fish to fry" or a similar expression to convey that you or someone else has more important tasks or responsibilities? Can you share a specific situation where you used this expression or heard it being used?
2. How do you determine the relative importance or significance of tasks or responsibilities in your personal or professional life? Are there any specific criteria or factors that influence your prioritization process?
3. Is there a potential downside to using the "bigger fish to fry" mindset when it comes to managing tasks and responsibilities? Can it lead to neglecting or undervaluing certain tasks or opportunities?
4. In what ways can the phrase "He's got bigger fish to fry" be used as a polite way to decline or excuse oneself from less important commitments or requests? Can you think of any alternative expressions that serve a similar purpose?
5. How does the cultural or societal context in which you live influence the prioritization of tasks and responsibilities? Are there any specific cultural norms or expectations that shape how individuals determine their "bigger fish to fry"?