



American Expression E0522 Last but not least

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"Last but not least" is a commonly used expression in the English language, often employed to highlight the significance of the final item or person in a list or sequence. The phrase emphasizes that even though the mentioned subject is presented last, it should not be underestimated or overlooked because of its positioning. Instead, it deserves equal attention and consideration as the preceding elements. The idiom's origins can be traced back to the art of rhetoric, where speakers and writers strategically placed their most essential points at the end to leave a lasting impact on their audience.

The phrase is versatile and can be used in various contexts, both formal and informal. In everyday conversations, it is used to add emphasis and build anticipation when discussing a series of items, ideas, or individuals. For example, in a gathering of friends discussing their favorite movies, someone might say, "We watched some classic films like 'Gone with the Wind,' 'The Godfather,' and 'Casablanca.' But last but not least, we can't forget 'The Shawshank Redemption,' which is a masterpiece in its own right."

In a professional setting, "last but not least" can be employed to recognize team members or acknowledge their contributions during a presentation or meeting. A manager might say, "Today, we are celebrating the accomplishments of our outstanding team. First, we have recognized John's exceptional sales performance, followed by Sarah's innovative marketing strategies. And last but not least, I want to commend Lisa for her dedication and excellent customer service."

The expression's rhetorical power lies in its ability to create a sense of anticipation, surprise, or closure. When used at the end of a series of points, it prompts the listener or reader to pay extra attention to the final element, making it more memorable. By placing something of value or significance at the end, the speaker or writer ensures it stands out in the audience's mind.

Furthermore, "last but not least" can also be employed as a transitional phrase in writing, especially in essays or articles. It aids in transitioning from one topic or section to another while reinforcing the importance of the upcoming information. For instance, in an article about environmental conservation, the author might write, "We have explored various renewable energy sources, discussed the impact of deforestation, and the importance of water conservation. Now, turning our attention to wildlife preservation, last but not least, we delve into the significance of protecting endangered species."

It is essential to note that while "last but not least" effectively draws attention to the final element, it should be used judiciously. Overusing this expression may diminish its impact and appear repetitive. Therefore, speakers and writers should use it selectively, reserving it for situations where the concluding point holds genuine importance or when they wish to create a powerful concluding statement.

In conclusion, "last but not least" is a versatile idiom that emphasizes the significance of the final item or person in a list or sequence. Its rhetorical power lies in building anticipation and leaving a lasting impact on the audience. Whether used in casual conversations, professional presentations, or writing, this expression effectively draws attention to the last element and ensures it receives the consideration it deserves. However, like any linguistic tool, it should be used judiciously to maintain its impact and avoid unnecessary repetition.

#### Questions for Discussion

1. In what situations do you find yourself using the expression "last but not least" in your daily conversations? Is there a particular context where you believe it adds the most impact or emphasis?
  2. How does the use of "last but not least" in writing or presentations contribute to effective communication? Can you share examples where employing this phrase enhanced the overall message or made a specific point more memorable?
  3. In some cultures, there are similar expressions to "last but not least." Are there any idioms or phrases in your native language that serve a similar purpose? Discuss the cultural significance of such expressions and how they are used in various contexts.
  4. When it comes to prioritizing tasks or making decisions, do you tend to save the most critical task for last? How does this approach influence your productivity and decision-making process?
  5. Consider a time when you were in a group setting, and someone used the phrase "last but not least." How did the audience react, and did it have the intended effect of drawing attention to the final point? Discuss the impact of using rhetorical devices like this in public speaking or presentations.
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