



American Expression E0870 When pigs fly

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"When pigs fly" is a popular and humorous idiom used to express extreme skepticism or disbelief about the likelihood of something happening. The phrase is often employed to emphasize the absurdity or impossibility of a particular event or scenario. It is a lighthearted way of saying that the chances of the mentioned event occurring are highly improbable or virtually non-existent.

The origin of the phrase can be traced back to the early 19th century, with various variations appearing in literature and colloquial language. The expression likely gained popularity due to the playful and whimsical imagery it conjures, as pigs are not typically associated with flight or the ability to fly.

The idiom "When pigs fly" is commonly used in response to outlandish or far-fetched ideas, proposals, or promises. For example, if someone were to suggest that they would become a world-famous astronaut without any prior training, others might humorously reply with, "Sure, when pigs fly!" This response serves to highlight the unlikelihood of the proposition.

Moreover, the phrase is employed in a range of contexts, from casual conversations to more serious discussions. In the latter case, it can be used to express doubts or skepticism about the feasibility of certain plans, goals, or predictions. It is a concise and witty way to convey a lack of confidence in the potential success of an endeavor.

"When pigs fly" also serves as a playful retort in situations where a request or demand is deemed unreasonable or unattainable. For instance, if someone asks for something that is clearly beyond reach, the response might be a light-hearted, "I'll do it when pigs fly!"

Additionally, this idiom has found its way into popular culture, appearing in literature, movies, and various forms of media. It is often used as a comedic device, adding humor to otherwise serious situations. The phrase's popularity in popular culture has further solidified its position as a well-known expression in the English language.

While "When pigs fly" is commonly used humorously, it is essential to consider the context and tone when employing this phrase. In some situations, it may be received as dismissive or disrespectful, particularly if used in response to someone's genuine aspirations or dreams. As with any expression, it is crucial to be mindful of the potential impact on the conversation and the feelings of those involved.

In conclusion, "When pigs fly" is a light-hearted and humorous idiom used to express extreme doubt or disbelief about the likelihood of something happening. Its whimsical imagery and playful tone make it a popular expression in a variety of contexts. While it serves as a witty way to convey skepticism, it's important to use the phrase with consideration for its impact on the conversation and the feelings of others.

#### Questions for Discussion

1. In what situations do you find yourself using the idiom "When pigs fly"? What do you think are the underlying reasons for its popularity as a humorous expression?
2. Have you ever encountered a situation where someone responded with "When pigs fly" to one of your ideas or aspirations? How did you feel about the response, and did it affect your determination to pursue your goal?
3. "When pigs fly" is often employed in a light-hearted manner, but can it sometimes be perceived as dismissive or discouraging? How can we strike a balance between humor and sensitivity when using this idiom in conversations?
4. How does the idiom "When pigs fly" compare to other idioms or expressions used to convey disbelief or skepticism? Are there cultural variations in how this concept is conveyed in different languages or regions?
5. Can you think of examples from literature, movies, or popular culture where the phrase "When pigs fly" is used to add humor or lightheartedness to a particular scene or situation? What role do idioms like this play in enhancing storytelling or communication?