



American Expression E1002 The best thing since sliced bread

IOTS Publishing Team  
International Online Teachers Society  
Since 2011

"The best thing since sliced bread" is an idiom used to express enthusiasm or admiration for something new or innovative. It conveys the idea that the thing being referred to is considered extremely valuable, groundbreaking, or a significant improvement over what came before. The expression often adds a touch of humor to emphasize the high regard in which the subject is held.

The phrase "the best thing since sliced bread" originates from the time when the invention of pre-sliced bread was seen as a major advancement in convenience. Before the widespread availability of pre-sliced bread, people had to manually slice loaves of bread at home, which could be time-consuming and less uniform. When pre-sliced bread was introduced, it revolutionized the way people consumed bread, making sandwiches and toasting much simpler and faster.

When someone uses this expression, they are likening the praised object or idea to the revolutionary impact that sliced bread had on people's lives. The phrase is often applied to a wide range of subjects, from technological innovations to lifestyle products, and even to people's achievements.

"The best thing since sliced bread" is frequently used in a light-hearted manner to express enthusiasm or approval. For example, if someone is excited about a new gadget, they might say, "This smartphone app is the best thing since sliced bread!" This usage underlines the speaker's strong endorsement of the new development.

However, it's important to note that the phrase can sometimes be used ironically or humorously to poke fun at the hyperbolic nature of such declarations. In this context, the speaker is playfully exaggerating the significance of something in a tongue-in-cheek way.

The expression has become deeply ingrained in popular language and culture, with its humorous and hyperbolic nature making it a memorable way to express excitement about something new or impressive. Its longevity in usage reflects its ability to succinctly convey a sense of admiration and amazement.

In conclusion, "the best thing since sliced bread" is an idiom that conveys enthusiastic admiration for a new development, idea, or product. It harkens back to the time when pre-sliced bread was a major convenience, suggesting that the subject being referred to is of great value or innovation. While often used to sincerely praise something, the phrase can also be used humorously to playfully exaggerate the significance of the subject. Its enduring popularity in language reflects its ability to succinctly capture the notion of enthusiasm and approval.

#### Questions for Discussion

1. How frequently do you come across the idiom "the best thing since sliced bread" in conversations or media? Can you share a recent example where someone used this phrase to express excitement about a new development or innovation?
2. In what contexts do you find the phrase "the best thing since sliced bread" most commonly used? How does it capture the idea of expressing enthusiasm and admiration for something novel or groundbreaking?
3. Can you think of instances where the phrase is used ironically or humorously to exaggerate the significance of something in a playful manner? How does this form of usage add a touch of lightheartedness to conversations?
4. How do you think the phrase "the best thing since sliced bread" reflects our tendency to embrace new technologies and innovations with excitement? How has this expression become a part of everyday language to convey our appreciation for progress?
5. Are there cultural or generational variations in the use and understanding of the idiom? How does the phrase capture the universal human tendency to celebrate and be amazed by new advancements, even if they might not be as revolutionary as sliced bread?