



American Expression E1182 What's good for the goose is good for the gander

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"What's good for the goose is good for the gander" is a well-known idiom that conveys the idea of fairness and equity. This expression suggests that the same rules, benefits, or standards should apply to all people or things in a given situation without discrimination or favoritism. In essence, it emphasizes the principle of equal treatment and reciprocity.

The idiom uses the metaphor of a "goose" and a "gander," which are male and female counterparts of a type of waterfowl, typically a type of duck or goose. In this context, the "goose" represents the male, and the "gander" represents the female. The phrase implies that whatever is deemed appropriate, advantageous, or acceptable for one gender or party should also be considered appropriate and advantageous for the other.

The expression is often invoked in discussions about fairness, justice, and equal rights. It underscores the importance of avoiding double standards or unequal treatment based on gender, status, or other criteria. When someone says, "What's good for the goose is good for the gander," they are essentially arguing for consistency and uniformity in how rules, expectations, or benefits are applied.

For instance, in the workplace, this idiom might be used to advocate for equal pay and opportunities for both men and women performing similar roles. It asserts that if a certain policy or practice benefits male employees, it should also be extended to female employees, ensuring fairness and gender equality.

In the context of relationships, the phrase can be used to highlight the importance of reciprocity and mutual respect. If one partner expects certain behaviors or privileges, the idiom suggests that these same expectations should apply to the other partner as well. This promotes healthy and balanced relationships based on fairness and equality.

In society at large, "What's good for the goose is good for the gander" is often invoked to advocate for equal rights and protections under the law. It emphasizes that legal and societal standards should apply uniformly to all citizens, regardless of their gender, race, religion, or other characteristics.

While the idiom is generally used to promote fairness and equal treatment, it can also be employed in a cautionary manner. For instance, it may be used to remind someone that if they engage in a particular behavior or action, they should expect the same behavior or action in return. This serves as a reminder that one's actions can have consequences and should be in line with the principle of reciprocity.

In conclusion, "What's good for the goose is good for the gander" is a widely recognized idiom that emphasizes the principles of fairness, equity, and reciprocity. It underscores the importance of treating all parties or individuals equally and avoiding double standards or discriminatory practices. Whether applied in discussions about gender equality, workplace fairness, or legal rights, this idiom serves as a reminder of the importance of consistent and equitable treatment for all.

Questions for Discussion

1. In what areas of life and society do you believe the principle of "What's good for the goose is good for the gander" is particularly relevant today, and why? Can you provide examples where equal treatment and reciprocity are critical?
2. How can the application of this idiom in workplaces contribute to greater gender equality and fairness? What steps can organizations take to ensure that policies and opportunities are consistent for all employees?
3. Can you think of instances in personal relationships where the principle of reciprocity and equal treatment has played a significant role? How can individuals use this concept to foster healthier and more equitable partnerships?
4. Are there situations or contexts where "What's good for the goose is good for the gander" might be challenging to apply, and why? What are some potential pitfalls or misunderstandings associated with this principle?
5. In discussions about societal issues such as civil rights and social justice, how does this idiom relate to the call for equal treatment under the law and equal access to opportunities for all individuals, regardless of their background or characteristics? Can you provide historical or contemporary examples of its application in these contexts?