



American Expression E1190 Drive a wedge

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To "drive a wedge" is an idiomatic expression used to describe actions or behaviors that create division, conflict, or discord between individuals, groups, or entities. The phrase draws its imagery from the physical act of inserting a wedge, which is a triangular-shaped object, into a crack or gap, causing separation or fragmentation. In a figurative sense, "driving a wedge" implies the deliberate effort to sow discord, mistrust, or disagreement within a previously unified or harmonious context.

This idiom can be applied in various situations, both interpersonal and societal, where the intention is to disrupt unity, collaboration, or cooperation. It often involves actions that exploit existing differences, disagreements, or vulnerabilities to widen divisions and weaken bonds between individuals or groups.

In interpersonal relationships, "driving a wedge" can manifest in various ways. For example, if someone spreads false rumors or gossip about others within a close-knit group of friends, they may be attempting to create conflict and mistrust, ultimately driving a wedge between friends who previously got along well.

In the context of workplace dynamics, individuals might use office politics or manipulation to undermine teamwork and create divisions among colleagues. This can lead to a toxic work environment where employees are pitted against each other rather than working collaboratively toward common goals.

In politics and social discourse, the expression is often used to describe actions or rhetoric that seek to divide communities or nations. Politicians, for instance, may employ divisive rhetoric to appeal to certain segments of the population, intentionally driving a wedge between different demographic groups for their own political gain.

In conflicts and disputes, individuals or parties may "drive a wedge" by exploiting existing grievances or differences between opposing sides. This tactic can exacerbate conflicts and make it more challenging to reach resolutions or find common ground.

Addressing the act of "driving a wedge" often requires recognizing the divisive tactics being used and actively working to promote unity, understanding, and collaboration. In interpersonal relationships, open and honest communication can help counteract efforts to create discord. In workplaces, fostering a culture of inclusivity and teamwork can mitigate the effects of division. In political and social contexts, promoting dialogue, empathy, and shared values can help bridge gaps and prevent further division.

It is important to distinguish between situations where disagreements and differences of opinion are healthy and conducive to growth and those where "driving a wedge" is a harmful and manipulative tactic. While healthy debate and differing perspectives can lead to innovation and progress, deliberately creating division for personal or political gain is detrimental to individuals and society as a whole.

In conclusion, "driving a wedge" is an idiomatic expression used to describe actions or behaviors that intentionally create division, conflict, or discord within interpersonal relationships, workplaces, or broader societal contexts. It signifies the deliberate effort to undermine unity, cooperation, or collaboration by exploiting existing differences or grievances. Recognizing and addressing such divisive tactics is essential for promoting healthy and harmonious relationships and communities.

#### Questions for Discussion

1. Can you provide examples from your own experiences or observations where someone attempted to "drive a wedge" between individuals or groups? What were the consequences of these actions, and how were they addressed or resolved?
2. In politics and social issues, "driving a wedge" is a common strategy used to polarize communities. How can individuals and communities foster open dialogue and bridge divisions caused by such tactics? Are there successful examples of unity in the face of divisive rhetoric?
3. In workplace dynamics, have you encountered situations where "driving a wedge" tactics were employed to create conflict among colleagues or teams? How can organizations promote a culture of cooperation and prevent such divisions from taking hold?
4. What are the ethical implications of intentionally "driving a wedge" between individuals or groups for personal gain or political advantage? How can society hold individuals and organizations accountable for divisive actions?
5. Are there instances where creating healthy disagreements and differing perspectives can be beneficial, without resorting to harmful tactics that "drive a wedge"? How can individuals and organizations strike a balance between encouraging diverse viewpoints and preventing harmful division?