



American Expression E1288 A bone to pick

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The phrase "a bone to pick" is an idiomatic expression in English that means someone has a complaint, grievance, or unresolved issue with another person or a situation. It is often used when someone wants to address a problem or bring up a matter of contention that has been bothering them. The phrase carries a sense of dissatisfaction or annoyance, suggesting that the person is eager to discuss and resolve the issue.

The origin of the phrase "a bone to pick" is not entirely clear, but it is believed to have its roots in the idea of picking meat off a bone. In this context, "picking a bone" implies scrutinizing and examining a situation closely to address any problems or concerns. Over time, this expression evolved into its current idiomatic usage.

When someone mentions that they have "a bone to pick" with another person, it signals that they have a specific issue or disagreement they want to discuss or resolve. This issue could range from a minor annoyance to a more significant dispute. The person using the phrase is expressing a desire for a conversation or confrontation to address the problem constructively.

For example, imagine two coworkers who have been collaborating on a project. One coworker believes that the other is not contributing their fair share of work, and this has caused delays and frustrations. In this scenario, the coworker may approach their colleague and say, "I have a bone to pick with you about our project's progress." This signals their intention to discuss the issue and find a resolution.

It's worth noting that "a bone to pick" doesn't always refer to interpersonal conflicts; it can also be used in broader contexts. For instance, a consumer might have "a bone to pick" with a company about the quality of a product or the level of customer service they received. In this case, the person is expressing dissatisfaction and a desire for the company to address their concerns.

Using the phrase "a bone to pick" can serve as a way to initiate a conversation about issues that may have been lingering or festering. It encourages open communication and the opportunity to resolve conflicts, clear misunderstandings, or seek solutions to problems. However, it's essential to approach these discussions with empathy and a willingness to listen to the other party's perspective to achieve a constructive outcome.

In summary, "a bone to pick" is an idiom that signifies having a complaint, grievance, or unresolved issue with someone or something. It suggests a desire to address the problem and engage in a discussion or confrontation to find a resolution. This phrase emphasizes the importance of open communication and the potential for conflict resolution when issues are brought into the open.

#### Questions for Discussion

1. Can you recall a situation where you had "a bone to pick" with someone, and how did you approach the conversation to address the issue constructively?
  2. What are some common challenges people face when attempting to bring up issues they have "a bone to pick" about, and how can effective communication strategies help overcome these challenges?
  3. In your opinion, what distinguishes minor annoyances from more significant issues that warrant bringing up "a bone to pick"? How do you decide when it's essential to address a problem with someone or something?
  4. Can you share an example of a time when you successfully resolved a conflict or complaint by having "a bone to pick" conversation, and what key principles or techniques contributed to the positive outcome?
  5. How can organizations and individuals foster a culture of open communication and encourage people to express their concerns or have "a bone to pick" when necessary, without fear of backlash or reprisal?
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