



American Expression E1295 A tall order

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The phrase "a tall order" is a common idiom in the English language that is used to describe a task, request, or expectation that is exceptionally challenging, difficult, or demanding. When someone refers to something as "a tall order," they are emphasizing the magnitude of the task or the significant effort required to accomplish it. This idiom can be applied to various aspects of life, from work assignments and personal goals to everyday challenges.

The origins of this expression can be traced back to the world of tailoring and fashion. In this context, a "tall order" referred to a request for clothing that was larger or more complex to create than the standard sizes or designs. Such requests were challenging for tailors because they required extra time, skill, and materials. Over time, the phrase evolved beyond the realm of fashion and became a metaphor for any undertaking that presents substantial difficulty or complexity.

When someone uses the term "a tall order," they may be expressing skepticism about the feasibility of the task or indicating that it surpasses their current capabilities or resources. For example, if a colleague at work assigns you a project with an extremely tight deadline and a substantial workload, you might remark, "That's a tall order," to convey your recognition of the task's difficulty and the challenges it presents.

In personal contexts, "a tall order" can be applied to goals or aspirations that are ambitious and demanding. For instance, someone who decides to climb a challenging mountain or write a novel within a short timeframe is setting themselves a tall order. It signifies that they are taking on a significant challenge that may require extensive preparation, determination, and effort.

This idiom can also be used in everyday situations to describe challenging requests or demands made of someone. If a friend asks for a significant favor that requires a considerable investment of time or resources, you might say, "That's a tall order," to express that fulfilling their request will be no small feat.

Moreover, "a tall order" underscores the importance of recognizing the limits of one's capabilities and resources. It encourages realistic assessments of what can be achieved and a thoughtful consideration of the potential obstacles and difficulties that may arise. While tackling tall orders can be admirable and lead to personal growth, it's crucial to do so with a clear understanding of the challenges involved.

In conclusion, "a tall order" is an idiom that vividly conveys the idea of a task or request that is exceptionally challenging and demanding. Its origins in tailoring highlight the concept of exceeding standard expectations, and it has since become a versatile expression used in various contexts to acknowledge the difficulty or complexity of an endeavor. Embracing a tall order can lead to personal and professional growth, but it also requires careful planning, effort, and a realistic assessment of one's capabilities and resources.

#### Questions for Discussion

1. Can you think of a personal or professional experience where you were faced with "a tall order"? How did you approach the situation, and what strategies or resources did you use to tackle the challenge?
2. In what ways does society or culture influence our perception of what constitutes "a tall order"? Are there cultural variations in the expectations placed on individuals in different parts of the world?
3. Can you share examples of historical figures or contemporary individuals who undertook "tall orders" and achieved remarkable success despite the odds? What lessons can be drawn from their experiences?
4. How can the concept of "a tall order" be applied to setting personal or professional goals? What considerations should one keep in mind when deciding to pursue ambitious objectives, and how can they increase their chances of success?
5. Have you ever encountered situations where you had to assess whether a task or request was genuinely "a tall order" or if it appeared more challenging than it actually was? How did you make that determination, and what factors influenced your decision?