



American Expression E1567 Not hold water

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The idiom "not hold water" is a common expression used to convey the idea that a particular argument, explanation, theory, or statement is not valid, convincing, or credible. When something does not hold water, it means that upon closer examination or scrutiny, it falls apart or proves to be unfounded. This phrase has been in use for centuries and is often employed in everyday conversation to question the reliability or truthfulness of a claim or assertion.

The origins of this idiom can be traced back to the practice of carrying water in containers with holes or leaks. Imagine trying to transport water in a container that cannot hold the liquid due to its imperfections or defects. In such a situation, the water would continually escape, making the task impossible or highly ineffective. Similarly, when an argument or statement does not hold water, it is as if it has leaks or flaws that make it unreliable.

In various contexts, the phrase "not hold water" signifies a lack of credibility or logical consistency. It is commonly used in discussions, debates, or critical analyses to point out weaknesses or inconsistencies in an argument or explanation. For example, if someone presents a theory that lacks evidence or contradicts established facts, you might say that their theory does not hold water, implying that it cannot withstand scrutiny.

One of the key characteristics of an argument or explanation that does not hold water is the presence of logical fallacies or unsupported claims. When evaluating whether a statement or theory holds water, one must consider whether it is based on sound reasoning, supported by credible evidence, and free from internal contradictions.

In everyday situations, we encounter examples of arguments or claims that do not hold water. These might include conspiracy theories without substantial proof, excuses that lack validity, or justifications that contradict known facts. It is essential to recognize when something does not hold water to make informed decisions and engage in meaningful discussions.

Identifying when an argument or explanation does not hold water is a critical thinking skill. It involves scrutinizing the evidence, assessing the logical consistency, and evaluating the credibility of the source. This ability is particularly valuable in fields like science, journalism, and law, where accuracy and reliability are paramount.

In conclusion, the idiom "not hold water" is a vivid expression used to describe the inadequacy or invalidity of an argument, explanation, theory, or statement. Just as a container with leaks cannot effectively hold water, a statement that does not hold water lacks credibility, logic, or supporting evidence. Recognizing when something does not hold water is essential for critical thinking and making informed judgments in various aspects of life.

Questions for Discussion

1. Can you think of a recent example from the media or public discourse where an argument or explanation did not hold water? What were the key flaws or inconsistencies in that case?
 2. How can one differentiate between a legitimate argument that holds water and an unsubstantiated claim or theory that does not hold water? What criteria do you use to make this determination?
 3. In your personal or professional life, have you ever encountered a situation where someone presented an explanation that initially seemed plausible but later did not hold water upon closer examination? How did you handle it?
 4. What role does critical thinking play in identifying arguments or explanations that do not hold water? How can individuals develop their critical thinking skills to better evaluate claims and statements?
 5. How does the concept of "not holding water" relate to the broader issue of misinformation and fake news in today's information landscape? What strategies can people employ to critically assess the credibility of information they encounter?
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