



American Expression E1572 Drop the subject

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"Drop the subject" is an idiom that is often used colloquially to suggest that someone should stop discussing or pursuing a particular topic, issue, or line of conversation. It is a phrase employed to convey the idea that the current subject or issue is either uninteresting, irrelevant, or potentially contentious, and it is advisable to cease talking about it. This idiom is frequently used in social interactions, debates, and discussions to redirect the conversation away from a potentially problematic or fruitless topic.

The phrase's origin is somewhat elusive, but its usage has become common in everyday language. When someone tells another person to "drop the subject," they are essentially urging them to discontinue their focus on the current matter and to shift their attention to something else. This can be done for various reasons, including to avoid conflict, maintain harmony in a conversation, or simply because the topic is considered unimportant.

In conversations, "drop the subject" is often used as a polite or subtle way of ending a discussion without explicitly stating that the topic is unwelcome. It can be particularly useful when people have differing opinions, and a resolution or consensus seems unlikely or when discussing a sensitive or personal matter that may make others uncomfortable.

For example, during a family dinner, if a contentious political topic arises, and it becomes clear that the conversation is becoming heated and unproductive, someone at the table might say, "Let's drop the subject and talk about something lighter." This is an attempt to shift the focus away from the divisive topic and towards a more neutral or enjoyable one.

In some cases, the phrase may be used more forcefully, indicating that the topic is not only undesirable but also inappropriate or disrespectful. For instance, if someone is persistently bringing up a painful or embarrassing event from another person's past, they may be told to "drop the subject" as a way of asserting boundaries and discouraging further discussion of the sensitive issue.

It's important to note that while "drop the subject" can be a useful tool for maintaining conversational etiquette and avoiding conflict, it should be used with care and sensitivity. In some situations, it may be better to address the issue directly or find a constructive way to discuss difficult topics rather than abruptly shutting down the conversation.

In conclusion, "drop the subject" is a widely used idiom that suggests discontinuing a particular topic or line of conversation. It is employed to redirect discussions away from potentially contentious, irrelevant, or uncomfortable subjects in social interactions, debates, and everyday conversations. The phrase serves as a way to maintain harmony, avoid conflict, or simply shift the focus to more productive or enjoyable topics.

Questions for Discussion

1. Can you recall a recent situation where you felt the need to use the phrase "drop the subject" in a conversation? What prompted you to do so, and how did it impact the interaction?
2. How do cultural and social norms influence when and how people use the idiom "drop the subject" in different parts of the world? Are there cultural variations in how sensitive or contentious topics are handled?
3. In what contexts or types of conversations do you think it is most important to use "drop the subject" as a way of maintaining polite and respectful communication? Can you provide examples of such situations?
4. Have you ever experienced a conversation where someone refused to "drop the subject" despite clear signals that the topic was making others uncomfortable? How did you or others handle this situation, and what were the outcomes?
5. Is there an alternative phrase or strategy you prefer to use when you want to redirect a conversation away from a problematic or sensitive topic, other than saying "drop the subject"? How effective have you found these alternatives to be in practice?