



American Expression E1683 Gloss over

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"Gloss over" is an idiomatic expression that means to downplay, ignore, or give only superficial attention to something, often an issue or a problem. When someone "glosses over" a topic or situation, they typically avoid discussing it in depth or fail to acknowledge its significance, choosing instead to focus on the more positive or less problematic aspects. This phrase is commonly used in both casual and formal language to describe how people sometimes handle uncomfortable or challenging subjects.

The term "gloss" in this context is borrowed from the world of printing and publishing, where a gloss is a shiny or reflective coating applied to a surface, such as paper. This coating can enhance the appearance of the surface by making it smooth and shiny. In a figurative sense, when people "gloss over" something, they are metaphorically smoothing over a topic or issue to make it seem less problematic or to present it in a more favorable light.

"Glossing over" can occur in various contexts. In personal relationships, someone might "gloss over" a disagreement by quickly changing the subject or avoiding a deeper discussion about the issue at hand. In this case, they may want to preserve harmony or avoid confrontation.

In the workplace, "glossing over" can be observed when a manager or colleague minimizes the impact of a problem to maintain a positive image or to prevent panic among team members. It can also be used when presenting a project's progress, highlighting achievements while downplaying any challenges or setbacks.

In politics and public discourse, "glossing over" is often associated with politicians or spokespersons who evade difficult questions, provide vague answers, or use rhetoric to avoid addressing controversial issues directly. This tactic can be employed to maintain popularity or to avoid negative public perception.

In self-reflection and personal growth, individuals may sometimes "gloss over" their own flaws, mistakes, or areas needing improvement as a way to protect their self-esteem or avoid confronting uncomfortable truths about themselves.

While "glossing over" may offer temporary relief from discomfort or conflict, it can have negative consequences in the long run. It can hinder effective communication, lead to misunderstandings, and prevent the resolution of underlying issues. In some cases, it may even erode trust when people perceive that others are not being honest or transparent.

However, it's essential to recognize that there are situations where "glossing over" may be a strategic or diplomatic choice. For example, in negotiations or delicate conversations, focusing on common ground or shared goals while temporarily setting aside contentious issues can help build bridges and maintain a constructive dialogue.

In conclusion, "glossing over" is an idiomatic expression that refers to the act of downplaying or avoiding discussing difficult, uncomfortable, or problematic topics or issues. While it can be a coping mechanism in certain situations, it is important to strike a balance between preserving harmony and addressing important matters honestly and effectively to ensure open communication and resolution of underlying problems.

Questions for Discussion

1. Can you think of a recent situation in which someone "glossed over" an issue or problem, and how did that approach affect the overall outcome and communication in that situation?
2. What are some common reasons why individuals choose to "gloss over" difficult topics or issues in personal or professional relationships, and how can this avoidance impact the long-term health of those relationships?
3. In what ways can the practice of "glossing over" affect decision-making in the workplace, and what strategies can organizations implement to encourage open and honest communication among employees and leaders?
4. Are there instances where "glossing over" might be a useful or necessary strategy, such as in diplomatic negotiations or public relations? How can individuals determine when to use this approach effectively and when it might be counterproductive?
5. How can individuals strike a balance between addressing uncomfortable or challenging issues directly and maintaining empathy, respect, and effective communication, especially in situations where emotions run high or opinions differ significantly?