American Expression E1710 It'll never fly

IOTS Publishing Team
International Online Teachers Society
Since 2011

The expression "It'll never fly" is a colloquial and idiomatic phrase used to convey skepticism or doubt about the success, feasibility, or viability of a particular idea, plan, project, or proposal. When someone uses this phrase, they are essentially expressing their belief that the proposed concept is unlikely to work or be accepted, often due to significant flaws or impracticality.

The origins of the phrase "It'll never fly" can be traced back to the world of aviation. In the early days of aviation, inventors and engineers worked on designing and building various flying machines, including gliders and powered aircraft. Many of these early attempts faced numerous challenges and obstacles, often resulting in failure. Pilots and engineers would use the phrase "It'll never fly" to dismiss designs or concepts that they deemed unworkable or too risky to attempt.

Over time, the expression "It'll never fly" transcended its aviation origins and became a more general way of expressing doubt or skepticism about any idea or plan. It is now commonly used in everyday language to question the practicality or likelihood of success in a wide range of contexts.

When someone says "It'll never fly," they may be pointing out various issues that they believe make the proposed idea or plan unworkable. These issues can include financial impracticality, technical challenges, a lack of support or interest from others, or a failure to address key concerns or objections.

For example, if someone presents a business proposal with an untested and risky business model, others in the meeting might respond with, "I'm sorry, but it'll never fly." In this context, they are expressing doubts about the proposal's potential for success, perhaps due to the high level of risk involved.

Similarly, in creative or artistic endeavors, if someone suggests a project that lacks a clear vision or direction, their peers might respond with, "That idea will never fly." This indicates skepticism about the project's feasibility or its ability to gain traction or appeal to an audience.

While "It'll never fly" is often used to express skepticism, it should not necessarily be seen as the final verdict on an idea or plan. It is a way of initiating a discussion or evaluation of the proposal's strengths and weaknesses. In some cases, the doubt expressed through this phrase can lead to constructive feedback and improvements that make the idea more viable.

In conclusion, "It'll never fly" is an idiomatic expression used to convey doubt or skepticism about the practicality or potential success of a proposed idea, plan, project, or proposal. It has its origins in aviation but has since become a versatile phrase used in various contexts to question the feasibility or likelihood of an idea working due to perceived flaws or impracticality. While it may express skepticism, it often serves as a starting point for discussions and evaluations that can lead to improvements or alternative solutions.

Questions for Discussion

1. Can you share a personal or professional experience where you encountered skepticism or doubt expressed through the phrase "It'll never fly" in response to an idea or proposal? How did you navigate or respond to this initial skepticism?
2. How can the phrase "It'll never fly" be a valuable starting point for critical evaluation and improvement of ideas or plans? What strategies can individuals or teams use to address doubts and make their proposals more viable?
3. In what ways can the perception of whether an idea "will fly" vary among different individuals or groups? What factors contribute to differing opinions on the feasibility or potential success of a concept?
4. Are there examples from history or contemporary culture where ideas or innovations were initially met with skepticism but ultimately proved successful despite the doubts expressed through phrases like "It'll never fly"? What lessons can be drawn from these cases?
5. How can constructive feedback and open dialogue help address doubts expressed through the phrase "It'll never fly" and lead to the refinement or adaptation of ideas, ultimately increasing their chances of success?