



American Expression E1895 Apples to oranges

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"Apples to oranges" is a common idiom in the English language that is used to highlight the fundamental differences between two things or concepts that are being compared. When someone says, "It's like comparing apples to oranges," they are emphasizing that the two items being compared are so dissimilar that the comparison itself is illogical or unfair. This expression serves as a reminder that not all comparisons are meaningful, and it cautions against drawing conclusions or making judgments without considering the inherent disparities.

The phrase derives its imagery from the noticeable differences between apples and oranges, two fruits that are easily distinguishable in various aspects such as appearance, taste, texture, and even their uses. Apples are typically round, with smooth skin that varies in color, while oranges are typically spherical but have dimpled, textured skin and a vibrant orange hue. Apples are often crisp and come in a variety of flavors, while oranges are generally sweet and juicy. Moreover, they serve different culinary purposes; apples are often eaten raw, used in baking, or made into cider, while oranges are primarily consumed as a juicy snack or used to make juice.

The expression "apples to oranges" is not limited to fruit but rather serves as a metaphor for comparing dissimilar entities in any context. It is frequently employed to highlight the absurdity of making comparisons that overlook crucial differences. For instance, comparing the talents of a renowned musician to those of a professional athlete would be like comparing apples to oranges, as their skill sets and domains of expertise are entirely distinct.

This idiom underscores the importance of context and relevance in making comparisons. Not all comparisons are inherently flawed; they can be valid and useful when the items being compared share common characteristics or a relevant context. However, when attempting to draw parallels between entities that lack significant similarities or share no common ground, it can lead to confusion, misinterpretation, or erroneous conclusions.

In many cases, the "apples to oranges" comparison is invoked to discourage oversimplification or the tendency to generalize. It serves as a reminder that the world is a complex and multifaceted place where nuance matters. For instance, comparing the educational systems of two countries with entirely different histories, cultures, and priorities would be akin to comparing apples to oranges. Such comparisons oversimplify the intricate dynamics at play in each system and can lead to a distorted understanding.

In conclusion, "apples to oranges" is a widely used idiom that emphasizes the impracticality of comparing two things or concepts that are fundamentally dissimilar. This expression draws its imagery from the easily distinguishable differences between apples and oranges and serves as a reminder of the importance of context, relevance, and nuance when making comparisons. It cautions against oversimplification and encourages a more thoughtful approach to understanding and analyzing the complexities of the world around us.

#### Questions for Discussion

1. Can you think of a recent example where someone attempted to compare "apples to oranges" in a discussion or argument, and how did that impact the clarity of the conversation?
2. How do you navigate situations where comparisons between dissimilar entities, like "apples to oranges," are made in everyday life, and what strategies do you use to address such comparisons?
3. In what areas of life or fields of study do you believe the tendency to make inappropriate comparisons, akin to "apples to oranges," can be particularly problematic, and why?
4. Can you share an instance where a valid comparison was made despite the inherent differences between the two entities, and what made that comparison meaningful or relevant?
5. How can we encourage more thoughtful and nuanced discussions and debates, especially in situations where individuals may be inclined to make oversimplified or inappropriate comparisons similar to "apples to oranges"?