



American Expression E1937 Bag and baggage

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The phrase "bag and baggage" is an idiomatic expression that is used to indicate the entirety of one's possessions, belongings, or personal effects, often when referring to moving, departing, or leaving a place. When someone says they are leaving with "bag and baggage," it means they are taking everything they own with them, leaving nothing behind.

The origins of the phrase can be traced back to nautical and military contexts. In the past, when individuals or groups were preparing to leave a ship or military encampment, they would pack their personal belongings in bags and containers. This included not only clothing and personal items but also any equipment or supplies they might need for their journey or mission. By saying they were departing with "bag and baggage," they were essentially declaring that they were taking everything they had and leaving nothing behind.

Over time, the phrase evolved to be used more broadly in everyday language. Today, it is employed in various situations to convey the idea of a complete departure or relocation. For example, when someone is moving to a new home, they might say, "I'm leaving with bag and baggage," indicating that they are taking all of their possessions with them. Similarly, it can be used in the context of travel, indicating that someone is taking all of their luggage and personal items on a trip.

In addition to its literal meaning, "bag and baggage" can also be used figuratively to describe a complete or thorough departure from a particular situation or circumstance. For instance, someone who decides to quit a job and leave a company might say they are leaving "with bag and baggage" to emphasize their complete departure from the organization and its associated responsibilities.

While the phrase is generally straightforward in meaning, it is worth noting that it is somewhat old-fashioned and less commonly used in modern conversation. It is more likely to appear in written or formal contexts, such as literature or legal documents, than in everyday speech.

In summary, "bag and baggage" is an idiomatic expression that signifies taking all of one's possessions, belongings, or personal effects when departing or relocating from a place. Its origins are rooted in nautical and military traditions, where individuals would pack their belongings in bags and containers before leaving a ship or military encampment. Today, it is used both literally and figuratively to convey a complete departure or relocation, indicating that nothing is being left behind. While somewhat old-fashioned, it continues to be used in various written and formal contexts.

Questions for Discussion

1. In what situations have you personally used the expression "bag and baggage" to describe a departure, and what did it signify in those instances?
2. How does the use of "bag and baggage" differ from simply saying "packing up" or "leaving with all my belongings"? What nuances or connotations does the phrase carry?
3. Can you think of literary or historical examples where the phrase "bag and baggage" was used to emphasize a character's complete departure from a place or situation? What impact did it have on the narrative?
4. When planning a move or relocation, what considerations should individuals take into account to ensure they are truly leaving with "bag and baggage" and not overlooking important items or responsibilities?
5. Are there cultural or regional variations in the use of this phrase, and how does its meaning or significance differ in various cultural contexts?