



American Expression E2013 Bone of contention

IOTS Publishing Team
International Online Teachers Society
Since 2011

The expression "bone of contention" is a figurative idiom used to describe a topic, issue, or dispute that is a constant source of disagreement or conflict among individuals or groups. This phrase conveys the idea that the contentious matter is akin to a bone that various parties are eager to chew on or argue about. When something becomes a "bone of contention," it typically involves deeply held differences of opinion, values, or interests. This can pertain to various aspects of life, such as politics, religion, family matters, or even professional disputes. Essentially, it signifies an ongoing and unresolved conflict that continues to provoke tension and disagreements.

In many cases, a bone of contention arises from divergent perspectives or interests. For instance, within a family, the distribution of an inheritance or the choice of a family heirloom can become a bone of contention if siblings have conflicting views on how these matters should be handled. In the realm of politics, issues like immigration, taxation, or healthcare can serve as bones of contention, where different political parties or interest groups vigorously debate their positions.

Historically, religious beliefs and practices have been a frequent source of bones of contention. Religious conflicts, such as the Crusades or the Reformation, were fueled by differing interpretations of faith and theological principles. In contemporary times, issues like freedom of religion, the role of religion in public life, and the boundaries of religious freedom can still be bones of contention in societies with diverse religious populations. The phrase "bone of contention" can also be applied to disputes within organizations or professional settings. Workplace conflicts, whether over leadership decisions, allocation of resources, or conflicting team goals, can create ongoing tensions that disrupt productivity and employee morale. In these contexts, addressing the bone of contention often requires effective communication, mediation, or conflict resolution strategies.

Interestingly, the term "bone of contention" can evolve over time as societal norms change or as individuals and groups reach consensus or compromise on certain issues. What was once a contentious matter may no longer hold the same level of conflict if a resolution is reached or if perspectives shift. In some cases, bones of contention can serve as catalysts for positive change. Debates and disagreements can lead to innovation, compromise, and the development of new policies or solutions that benefit society as a whole. While the process can be challenging and even contentious, it can ultimately contribute to progress and growth.

In conclusion, a "bone of contention" is a metaphorical expression that represents a persistent and divisive issue or dispute in various aspects of life, from personal relationships to politics and professional environments. These matters often involve conflicting perspectives or interests, and they can lead to ongoing tension and disagreements. Addressing bones of contention may require effective communication, mediation, or conflict resolution techniques, and their resolution can lead to positive change and growth in society.

Questions for Discussion

1. Can you think of any historical examples where a "bone of contention" played a significant role in shaping the course of events, and how did it ultimately get resolved or continue to impact society?
 2. How can identifying a "bone of contention" in personal relationships or professional settings help in addressing underlying conflicts, and what strategies can be employed to reach a resolution or compromise?
 3. In politics, what are some current "bones of contention" that have a major influence on public discourse, and how do these issues reflect differing values or interests within society?
 4. Can you share a personal experience where you were involved in a situation characterized by a "bone of contention," and what strategies or approaches did you use to try to resolve the conflict?
 5. In what ways can a "bone of contention" be a catalyst for positive change, and can you provide examples of conflicts that led to constructive outcomes or innovations in various fields?
-