



American Expression E2520 Make common cause

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The idiom “make common cause” means to join efforts with others in pursuit of a shared goal or interest. It describes a situation where individuals or groups, who might otherwise be independent or even opposed, decide to unite because they recognize a mutual benefit or a greater purpose that requires cooperation. The phrase conveys solidarity and the idea that collective action can be more powerful than isolated effort.

In practice, to make common cause is often about setting aside differences to focus on what unites people. Political parties, for instance, may make common cause when they join forces to pass legislation that serves the broader public good, even if they disagree on other issues. Likewise, community groups might unite around protecting the environment or supporting vulnerable populations, recognizing that collaboration is necessary to achieve lasting impact.

The expression also reflects the principle that unity amplifies strength. When people or organizations make common cause, they pool resources, share knowledge, and expand their influence. Alone, each participant may have limited power, but together, their collective voice or action can be transformative. This idea underscores the importance of cooperation in addressing challenges that are too large for any one party to solve alone.

Historically, the idiom has been tied to movements for justice, reform, and social progress. Civil rights activists, for example, often made common cause with allies from different backgrounds to bring about change. By highlighting common humanity and shared values, such alliances proved that solidarity could bridge divides and inspire lasting transformation. The phrase therefore carries both political and moral weight.

In modern contexts, “make common cause” applies not only to political or social movements but also to everyday life. Businesses might collaborate with competitors to tackle industry-wide problems, such as sustainability or safety standards. Individuals may make common cause with colleagues to advocate for fair workplace practices. On a smaller scale, friends or families often unite around a shared need, such as supporting a loved one during a crisis.

The idiom also serves as a reminder of the importance of perspective. Making common cause often requires looking beyond narrow self-interest to see the bigger picture. It challenges people to ask what they share rather than what divides them, cultivating empathy and strengthening social bonds. This attitude is essential in an increasingly interconnected world where cooperation is critical to solving global issues.

In conclusion, “make common cause” highlights the power of unity in achieving meaningful goals. It encourages individuals and groups to recognize shared interests and to work together despite differences. By embracing this principle, societies and communities can mobilize collective energy toward progress, proving that collaboration is often the key to overcoming challenges and creating lasting change.

Questions for Discussion

1. What are some real-life examples where making common cause led to meaningful change?
2. How can people with different beliefs or backgrounds successfully make common cause?
3. Why is it sometimes difficult to set aside personal interests to pursue a shared goal?
4. In what ways does making common cause amplify the strength of individuals or groups?
5. How can the idea of making common cause be applied in everyday community or workplace situations?