



American Expression E2521 Make do

IOTS Publishing Team
International Online Teachers Society
Since 2011

The phrase “make do” is a simple yet powerful expression that means to manage or cope with limited resources or less-than-ideal circumstances. It often conveys the idea of finding a way to get by without having everything one might want. In daily life, it shows how people use resilience, creativity, and adaptability to handle challenges and inconveniences. It is less about perfection and more about practicality, emphasizing the ability to survive and progress even when the conditions are far from ideal.

One of the key aspects of “make do” lies in its connection to resourcefulness. When people face a lack of money, tools, or time, they often find alternative ways to solve problems. For example, someone might cook a meal with whatever is available in the pantry rather than going shopping, or a child might play with improvised toys instead of store-bought ones. In both cases, the lack of resources does not prevent fulfillment but encourages inventive thinking.

“Make do” also reflects a broader cultural and historical reality. During times of war, depression, or crisis, entire societies have had to adopt this mindset. Rationing during World War II is a famous example where families learned to reuse, recycle, and stretch their resources to survive. These experiences highlight that “make do” is not only an individual act but also a collective practice that binds communities together during hardship.

On a personal level, the phrase carries a lesson in humility and gratitude. To “make do” is to accept that one does not always get everything desired and to recognize the value in what is already at hand. Instead of focusing on what is missing, it encourages appreciation of what exists. This attitude can build resilience, reduce stress, and promote a sense of balance, reminding people that happiness is not always tied to abundance but often to perspective.

At the same time, “make do” is not without its challenges. While it fosters creativity, it can also require sacrifice or acceptance of limitations. Sometimes making do can mean enduring uncomfortable or imperfect situations. For instance, living in a small space, working with outdated equipment, or wearing older clothes might not be ideal, but learning to adapt is part of the process. This acceptance is a skill that strengthens endurance and patience.

The phrase also has a moral dimension. To “make do” can be seen as a way of resisting waste and consumerism. Instead of constantly seeking replacements, it encourages people to reuse and repair what they already own. In today’s world, where sustainability is a pressing concern, this perspective feels especially relevant. It connects the old wisdom of past generations with modern efforts to live more responsibly.

In conclusion, “make do” is more than a phrase; it is a mindset that teaches resilience, creativity, gratitude, and sustainability. It shows how human beings can adapt and even thrive in less-than-perfect situations. By appreciating what we already have and finding innovative ways to use it, we discover that making do is not merely about surviving but about living with wisdom and balance in any circumstance.

Questions for Discussion

1. How does the idea of “make do” encourage creativity and problem-solving in daily life?
2. In what ways can “make do” promote gratitude and contentment with what we already have?
3. Can constantly “making do” sometimes hold people back from striving for better opportunities or improvements?
4. How has the concept of “make do” shaped societies during times of crisis, such as wars or economic hardship?
5. What role can “make do” play in promoting sustainability and reducing waste in modern life?