

IDIOMS & PHRASAL VERBS

Rhetoric and Evasion

C2 | Adults / Teens | Idioms + Discussion | 45-60 minutes

Topic: Discussion | Skills: Vocabulary, Speaking

Study the phrases and examples. Discuss the questions and try to use the new language.

USEFUL LANGUAGE

1. hedge your bets	avoid committing fully so that several outcomes remain acceptable	The committee hedged its bets by funding two competing approaches.
2. split hairs	argue about distinctions that seem unnecessarily small (disapproving)	They accused her of splitting hairs over the wording.
3. gloss over	treat something briefly to avoid its difficult details	The announcement glossed over the cost of the transition.
4. dance around the issue	avoid addressing the central problem directly	The spokesperson danced around the issue of responsibility.
5. move the goalposts	change the conditions for success unfairly (disapproving)	We met the targets, but the client moved the goalposts.
6. a fig leaf	something that conceals a less acceptable reality (disapproving)	Critics called the consultation a fig leaf for a predetermined decision.
7. smoke and mirrors	deceptive presentation that hides the truth (disapproving)	The impressive figures turned out to be smoke and mirrors.
8. get to the crux of	reach the most important point of a problem	Her final question got to the crux of the disagreement.

DISCUSSION

1. When does hedging your bets show prudence, and when does it undermine a clear strategy?
2. When is an accusation of splitting hairs a way of avoiding a legitimate distinction?
3. How can a concise explanation avoid glossing over its most inconvenient implications?
4. Why might someone dance around an issue even when their audience notices?
5. How can you distinguish moving the goalposts from a necessary revision of expectations?
6. What would distinguish meaningful consultation from a fig leaf for a decision already made?
7. What questions help reveal whether an impressive presentation is merely smoke and mirrors?
8. How can a chairperson get to the crux of a dispute without oversimplifying it?