

IDIOMS & PHRASAL VERBS

Strategy and Leverage

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

Topic: Workplace | Skills: Vocabulary, Speaking

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

USEFUL LANGUAGE

1. play your cards close to your chest	keep your plans or intentions secret	The negotiator played her cards close to her chest.
2. steal a march on	gain an advantage by acting before someone else	The smaller firm stole a march on its rivals with an early launch.
3. throw down the gauntlet	issue a serious challenge	The campaigners threw down the gauntlet by demanding an independent review.
4. call someone's bluff	challenge someone to carry out a threat you doubt	The negotiators called his bluff and refused the new conditions.
5. keep your powder dry	wait and preserve resources for a more useful moment	The team kept its powder dry until the final negotiation round.
6. box someone in	leave someone with very few choices	The public promise boxed the mayor in before talks began.
7. wrong-foot someone	surprise someone so they are unprepared to respond	The unexpected compromise wrong-footed the opposition.
8. stack the deck	arrange conditions to favour one side unfairly (disapproving)	The selection rules stacked the deck against smaller applicants.

DISCUSSION

1. When does playing your cards close to your chest protect trust, and when does it erode it?
2. Is stealing a march on competitors worth the risks of acting before testing is complete?
3. When does throwing down the gauntlet force useful action rather than entrench opposition?
4. What should you consider before calling someone's bluff in a high-stakes negotiation?
5. How can leaders keep their powder dry without appearing indecisive?
6. Why can a public commitment box someone in during a negotiation?
7. Can deliberately wrong-footing a negotiating partner damage the value of the eventual agreement?
8. How can apparently neutral selection criteria stack the deck against particular applicants?