

IDIOMS & PHRASAL VERBS

Constraints and Consequences

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. a double-edged sword	something that brings both advantages and disadvantages	Public visibility is a double-edged sword for a new organisation.
2. a poisoned chalice	an apparently desirable role that is likely to cause trouble	The prestigious job proved a poisoned chalice when the debts emerged.
3. a law of diminishing returns	a pattern in which extra effort brings progressively smaller gains	Our repeated revisions seemed subject to a law of diminishing returns.
4. paint yourself into a corner	create difficulties by limiting your own future choices	By promising an exact date, we painted ourselves into a corner.
5. come home to roost	produce unpleasant consequences later (usually of past mistakes)	Years of neglected maintenance finally came home to roost.
6. set a precedent	create an example that may guide future decisions	Approving the exception could set a precedent for later requests.
7. open the floodgates	allow a large and often uncontrolled increase in something	The rule change opened the floodgates to similar applications.
8. a catch-22	a trap caused by requirements that make each other impossible	She needed experience to get work, but work to gain experience: a catch-22.

DISCUSSION

1. When is transparency a double-edged sword for an organisation handling sensitive negotiations?
2. What warning signs suggest that an attractive promotion may be a poisoned chalice?
3. How should a team recognise diminishing returns without using them to excuse unfinished work?
4. How can a leader recover credibility after painting themselves into a corner?
5. Why do predictable problems often receive attention only when earlier decisions come home to roost?
6. When should compassion outweigh concerns about setting a precedent?
7. What evidence is needed before claiming that an exception will open the floodgates?
8. How could an institution redesign a process that creates a catch-22 for newcomers?