

IDIOMS & PHRASAL VERBS

Alliances and Conflict

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. close ranks	unite to protect a group from outside criticism	The board closed ranks when journalists questioned its conduct.
2. break ranks	publicly depart from a group's shared position	One member broke ranks and challenged the official account.
3. paper over the cracks	hide problems without solving them (disapproving)	The temporary agreement merely papered over the cracks.
4. throw someone under the bus	sacrifice another person to protect yourself (informal, disapproving)	The director threw her deputy under the bus to escape criticism.
5. an uneasy truce	a pause in conflict without real trust or agreement	The departments maintained an uneasy truce while sharing the budget.
6. a meeting of minds	a close agreement in thinking or understanding	Their discussion revealed a genuine meeting of minds.
7. at loggerheads	in strong disagreement	The two committees were at loggerheads over who should decide.
8. drive a wedge between	cause division or hostility between people or groups	Conflicting promises drove a wedge between the two partners.

DISCUSSION

1. When does closing ranks protect a team, and when does it prevent accountability?
2. What obligations should someone consider before breaking ranks with a professional group?
3. When can a temporary compromise buy useful time rather than paper over the cracks?
4. How can an organisation assign responsibility without throwing a convenient individual under the bus?
5. What could turn an uneasy truce into a workable long-term relationship?
6. Does effective cooperation require a meeting of minds, or can clearly defined interests be enough?
7. How should a mediator proceed when both sides at loggerheads believe they have moral authority?
8. How might unequal access to information drive a wedge between otherwise cooperative colleagues?