



American Expression E2238 Fair and square

IOTS Publishing Team
International Online Teachers Society
Since 2011

"Fair and square" is an idiomatic expression that conveys the idea of honesty, integrity, and fairness in an action, decision, or competition. It emphasizes the importance of playing by the rules, treating others with respect, and adhering to principles of justice and equity.

The phrase "fair and square" originated in medieval times and has its roots in the language of commerce and trade. In early usage, it referred to the practice of conducting business transactions in a straightforward and honest manner, without deception or fraud. Over time, the expression evolved to encompass broader notions of fairness and integrity in all areas of life.

Being "fair and square" means acting with honesty and transparency, regardless of personal gain or advantage. It implies a commitment to upholding principles of fairness and justice, even in the face of temptation or pressure to do otherwise. Whether it's in a game, a negotiation, or a dispute, being "fair and square" means playing by the rules and treating others with integrity and respect.

In a competitive context, being "fair and square" is essential for ensuring a level playing field and maintaining the integrity of the competition. It means following the established rules and regulations, respecting the rights and boundaries of opponents, and accepting the outcome of the competition, whether it results in victory or defeat. By competing "fair and square," individuals demonstrate sportsmanship and respect for the integrity of the game.

Moreover, being "fair and square" extends beyond individual actions to encompass broader systems of governance, justice, and social order. It implies a commitment to principles of equality, justice, and human rights, and a willingness to confront and address injustices and inequalities wherever they may exist. In this sense, being "fair and square" is not just about personal conduct but about contributing to the greater good and promoting a more just and equitable society.

Being "fair and square" also involves being accountable for one's actions and accepting responsibility for the consequences of those actions. It means owning up to mistakes, rectifying any harm caused, and making amends where necessary. By taking responsibility for our actions, we uphold the principles of fairness and integrity and demonstrate our commitment to doing what is right, even when it may be difficult or uncomfortable.

In conclusion, being "fair and square" is about more than just following the rules – it's about embodying principles of honesty, integrity, and fairness in all aspects of life. It means treating others with respect, playing by the rules, and accepting the outcomes of our actions with grace and humility. By striving to be "fair and square," we contribute to a more just and equitable world, where everyone has the opportunity to thrive and succeed on equal footing.

Questions for Discussion

1. What are some examples of situations where being "fair and square" is particularly important, and how does upholding principles of honesty and integrity contribute to the overall fairness of these situations?
2. How do cultural and societal norms influence our understanding and practice of being "fair and square"? Are there certain cultures or societies that prioritize fairness and integrity more than others?
3. Can you think of instances where individuals or organizations have been praised or criticized for their commitment to being "fair and square"? What factors contribute to perceptions of fairness and integrity in these cases?
4. In what ways can being "fair and square" contribute to building trust and fostering positive relationships in personal, professional, and societal contexts? How does honesty and integrity impact the dynamics of trust and cooperation?
5. How can we encourage and promote a culture of fairness and integrity in our communities, workplaces, and broader society? What role can education, leadership, and accountability play in upholding principles of being "fair and square" and addressing instances of dishonesty or injustice?