



American Expression E2298 Give airs

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"Give airs" is an idiomatic expression meaning to behave in a way that shows one considers themselves superior or more important than others. This phrase is often used pejoratively to describe someone who is acting pretentious, haughty, or snobbish. When someone is said to be "giving airs," they are perceived as putting on a facade of elevated status or importance, often without any substantial basis for such behavior.

The term likely originates from the notion of "putting on airs," where "airs" refers to a manner or appearance that is affected or artificial. This behavior is characterized by an exaggerated sense of self-importance and a desire to impress others by displaying what is perceived as superior qualities, tastes, or lifestyle.

In social contexts, people who "give airs" often do so through their speech, body language, and actions. They might speak in an overly formal or condescending manner, drop names of influential or famous people they know, or flaunt their possessions or achievements. This behavior is typically viewed negatively because it suggests a lack of humility and a desire to create social hierarchies where the person giving airs positions themselves above others.

"Giving airs" can be especially evident in environments where social status and appearances are highly valued, such as in certain professional settings, social circles, or cultural contexts. For example, a new employee might "give airs" by constantly talking about their prestigious educational background or previous high-profile job roles, attempting to establish themselves as superior to their colleagues.

The effects of such behavior can be detrimental to social and professional relationships. It can create feelings of resentment, alienation, and hostility among peers and colleagues. People who "give airs" may be perceived as insincere, insecure, or desperate for validation, which can damage their credibility and hinder their ability to form genuine connections with others.

Addressing the behavior of someone who is "giving airs" can be challenging. It often requires tact and diplomacy to help them recognize the impact of their actions without causing further alienation. Encouraging open communication, fostering an environment of mutual respect, and emphasizing the value of authenticity can help mitigate the negative effects of this behavior.

From a personal development perspective, understanding the reasons behind the need to "give airs" can be insightful. It often stems from underlying insecurities, a desire for acceptance, or societal pressures to conform to certain standards of success and status. Building self-awareness, confidence, and a genuine sense of self-worth can help individuals move away from pretentious behavior and cultivate more meaningful and respectful interactions.

In conclusion, "give airs" describes a behavior where individuals act superior or pretentious, often to gain social standing or admiration. This behavior is generally viewed negatively as it undermines genuine connections and can lead to social discord. By fostering self-awareness and promoting authenticity, individuals and communities can work towards more sincere and respectful interactions.

Questions for Discussion

1. What are some common behaviors or signs that indicate someone is giving airs?
2. How can giving airs affect relationships in personal and professional settings?
3. What underlying reasons might lead someone to give airs, and how can they address these issues?
4. How should you respond when you encounter someone who is giving airs?
5. Can you share an experience where giving airs created tension or conflict, and how was it resolved?