



American Expression E2386 In bed with

IOTS Publishing Team
International Online Teachers Society
Since 2011

The phrase "in bed with" is a colloquial idiom that suggests a close association or complicity between parties, often used to imply an alliance that might be secretive, unethical, or surprising. This metaphorical expression paints a vivid picture of intimacy and confidentiality, much like what is shared in the privacy of a bedroom, but applied to the realms of business, politics, or other relationships.

In politics, being "in bed with" someone often denotes a partnership that could be controversial or beneficial only to the parties involved, rather than to the public or common good. For example, a politician might be said to be "in bed with" certain corporations or lobby groups, suggesting that their decisions are unduly influenced by the interests of these entities rather than by the demands or needs of their constituents.

In the business world, the phrase can refer to unexpected or hidden collaborations between companies, especially when these partnerships might lead to conflicts of interest or anticompetitive practices. Such alliances might be strategic, aimed at maximizing profits or market share, but can also lead to public distrust if perceived as too cozy or improperly disclosed.

The term also extends to journalism, where being "in bed with" a source can compromise the objectivity expected of the press. When journalists form overly close relationships with their sources, there is a risk that the information reported may become biased, thereby failing the ethical standards of impartiality and truthfulness that are hallmarks of credible journalism.

The phrase isn't always negative, though. In certain contexts, it simply indicates a close cooperation necessary to achieve common goals, such as in technology or research, where companies or institutions may "get in bed with" each other to innovate or tackle complex challenges that require shared expertise and resources.

However, the implications of being "in bed with" someone are often subject to scrutiny. This scrutiny stems from a collective understanding that such relationships, while beneficial to the parties involved, might not always align with broader ethical standards or public expectations. The intimacy suggested by the phrase conveys not just closeness but a shared secrecy that can be problematic, especially when transparency and integrity are expected, as in governance or public service.

In conclusion, the idiom "in bed with" serves as a powerful metaphor to describe alliances that are deeply intertwined and potentially hidden. While it can denote necessary and strategic collaborations, it more commonly raises concerns about the propriety and transparency of such relationships. The phrase prompts us to consider the ethics of close associations, especially when these relationships occur in arenas where impartiality and fairness are paramount.

Questions for Discussion

1. What are the potential ethical implications of a company being perceived as "in bed with" governmental regulators?
2. How can organizations ensure transparency and avoid conflicts of interest when forming close collaborations or partnerships?
3. In what ways does the media's portrayal of being "in bed with" influence public perception and trust in businesses and politicians?
4. How can journalists maintain their objectivity and credibility when they are accused of being "in bed with" their sources?
5. What criteria should be used to assess whether a close relationship between two entities in a professional setting is beneficial or detrimental?