



American Expression E2405 In the cahoots

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"In cahoots" is an informal phrase used to describe a secret partnership or collaboration between two or more people, typically for a dishonest, deceitful, or unethical purpose. When individuals or groups are said to be "in cahoots," it implies that they are working together behind the scenes to achieve a shared, often questionable goal. This expression carries connotations of conspiracy, intrigue, and clandestine behavior, making it a popular choice when describing situations involving hidden agendas or underhanded dealings.

The origin of "in cahoots" is not entirely clear, but it is believed to have emerged in the United States in the early 19th century. Some linguists suggest that the word "cahoot" might be derived from the French word "cahute," meaning a small cabin or hut, which implies a place where people could meet secretly. Others speculate that it could be related to an old French verb "cahoter," meaning to shake or jolt, which might hint at the idea of people being "shaken together" in a secretive alliance. Despite its uncertain etymology, the phrase quickly became established in American English, often appearing in stories of crime, politics, or business where collusion or conspiracy was suspected.

The idea of being "in cahoots" can apply to various contexts, ranging from criminal activities to everyday scenarios. In a criminal sense, it might describe partners planning a heist, engaging in fraud, or attempting to deceive others for financial gain. For example, two thieves plotting to rob a bank could be said to be in cahoots. In more mundane situations, being "in cahoots" might describe less severe forms of collusion, such as friends collaborating to pull off a prank or colleagues conspiring to influence office politics.

In politics and business, the phrase often suggests a hidden alliance between individuals or organizations that work together for mutual benefit, sometimes at the expense of others. For example, if two companies secretly agree to fix prices or divide a market, they are said to be in cahoots. Similarly, politicians who work together behind the scenes to manipulate public opinion or policy decisions might be accused of being in cahoots, raising questions about transparency and ethical behavior.

The phrase "in cahoots" carries an inherently negative tone, as it implies deception, secrecy, and a lack of honesty. This makes it an effective way to highlight situations where trust is violated, or actions are taken without the knowledge or consent of others. It's often used in discussions that involve suspicions of wrongdoing or hidden motives.

In conclusion, "in cahoots" is a phrase that conveys the idea of a secret partnership, usually with dishonest or unethical intentions. Its uncertain origins add a layer of mystery to its meaning, while its application across various contexts emphasizes the themes of conspiracy and hidden agendas. Whether in crime, politics, or everyday life, being "in cahoots" suggests a level of collusion that is often viewed with suspicion and distrust.

Questions for Discussion

1. What factors make partnerships "in cahoots" more likely to form, especially in business or politics?
2. How does the idea of being "in cahoots" impact public trust in institutions or individuals when suspicions of collusion arise?
3. Are there any positive examples where being "in cahoots" might not have a negative connotation, or is it always associated with dishonesty?
4. How does the concept of being "in cahoots" differ from legitimate collaboration, and where do we draw the line between the two?
5. What are some historical or contemporary examples of people or organizations being "in cahoots," and how were they eventually exposed?