

Explain an expression

Supported B1-B2 | Adults and teens | About 15-20 minutes

1. Read the conversation

A: Does turn over a new leaf mean get a new job?

B: Not just that. Len used to interrupt people. Now he waits for them to finish. He has turned over a new leaf.

A: So it means change your behaviour in a better way?

B: Yes. A new job alone does not show that change.

2. Choose an expression

Choose one you know in any language, or use one below. You do not need to speak for everyone who uses that language.

Turn over a new leaf: start behaving in a better way.

Break the ice: help people feel more relaxed when first meeting.

Example: A short name game helped to break the ice in the new group.

Plan a few words. You can explain the picture in the words if it helps.

Expression: _____

Meaning: _____

Who might say it, and when? _____

3. Explain and check

Tell your partner the expression and a short situation. Explain the message in ordinary English.

Listener: ask one question about its meaning or use. Then say the message in your own words. The speaker checks. Swap roles.

Explain: It means ... / We might say it when ...

Ask: Do you mean ...? / Could it sound friendly or critical?

Check: Yes, that is what I mean. / Not quite. I mean ...

Can you suggest an English expression with a similar meaning? If you are unsure, keep the clear ordinary-English message. An exact match is optional.

4. Does it fit?

Tell two short situations: one fits your expression and one does not. Do not say which. Your partner chooses and explains why. Check together, then swap. After feedback, try your teacher's new situations.

Meaning first, then compare

Give learners page 1; keep this page for teaching

Outcome: explain an expression, check a listener's interpretation and judge its use in a new situation. Cross-language equivalents are optional. The English options make the task usable without remembered idioms or a shared first language.

A short route

3 min: read the Len model and check both meanings.

3: each learner chooses an expression and plans keywords.

4: both explain, ask and check. Follow an interesting detail.

3: each invents a fitting and non-fitting case. Accept a different interpretation if the added context supports it.

3-5: give feedback, then use the new cases. Hear each learner again.

Meaning, form and tone

Turn over a new leaf: Len's improved turn-taking fits; a new job or book page alone does not. Model turned over a new leaf / wants to turn over a new leaf. It can imply previous behaviour needed improvement; avoid targeting classmates.

Break the ice: the game helps new people relax. Model a game broke the ice / helped to break the ice. Frozen water is literal. This sheet selects the meeting-people use; broader uses exist.

Similar images do not prove equivalent meaning, tone or grammar. Verify unfamiliar English proposals; keep the plain message if uncertain. Do not invent word origins or cultural generalisations.

Fresh situations: reveal after feedback

A. Ari opens a new notebook but keeps missing the same deadlines.

B. After repeatedly ignoring messages, Jo now replies reliably.

C. New teammates are quiet. A brief chat helps them relax.

Ask: Would either expression fit? Explain in ordinary English first, then use an expression if it fits. Partners ask a follow-up.

Key: A does not establish turning over a new leaf. B fits improved behaviour. C fits breaking the ice. Ordinary-English answers are valid. For a learner-chosen expression, invent a genuinely new case together; leave uncertain usage as a question to check.

Observe each learner: clear message, relevant example, listener check, support needed. Keep meanings/starters for support; compare tone for stretch. One-to-one/online, alternate roles. No recording or private cards needed.

B1-B2 describes the supported task, not every chosen idiom. Later, try a new context before showing old notes. Timing and classroom effectiveness untested.

Sources: Cambridge Dictionary, turn over a new leaf and break the ice. Original examples and tasks by Gav & Em.