



## WORDS AND THEIR STORIES

# 'Having Skin in the Game' Is Not as Painful as It Sounds

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And now, *Words and Their Stories*, from VOA Learning English.

On this program we explore words and expressions in the English language. We give examples and notes on usage.

Today we talk about the largest organ of the human body -- our skin! As our protective outer layer, our skin can certainly gather many cuts and wounds.

In English, we have many skin expressions. I wrote about some of them in an [earlier Words and Their Stories](#).

In that story, I talk about expressions like thick-skinned people -- people who take criticism well. And if you are comfortable in your own skin, you are happy with who you are.

But today we talk about skin expressions that relate to having personal involvement in a certain situation.

If you have skin in the game, you are invested or involved in something directly. You have something **at stake**. In other words, you risk losing -- or gaining -- something. Usually, it is something financial.

To have skin in the game means you have an active interest in the success of something. If it fails, it affects you in some way. For example, workers who have stock in their company have skin in the game. So, they may work harder to make it successful.

You can also use this expression in the negative form. If you have no skin in the game, you have nothing at stake and nothing to lose. Having no skin in the game means you have no personal investment or risk in some goal, project, or situation. Again, we commonly use this expression when talking about business and finance.

But not always. For example, let's say I try to give advice to a friend about her **dating** situation. But she just does not want to listen to my advice. I can tell her that when it comes to her relationships, I have no skin in the game. It doesn't affect me personally. I just don't want her to see her get hurt ... again.

We have another skin expression that is close in meaning.

If something is no skin off your back, it does not affect you. It is of no interest or concern to you.

Let's hear this one used between two friends.

A: Hey, do you think I could borrow your lawn mower this weekend. My grass is getting really long.

B: Of course! You can pick it up anytime.

A: I promise I'll return it Sunday night. I know people are funny about loaning their tools out to others.

B: Not me. Especially my lawn mower. I have two! So, really, it's no skin off my back. Keep it as long as you need it!

A: Thanks!

You might sometimes hear this expression said this way: it's no skin off my nose. Whether the skin is on your back or nose, the expression means the same thing.

And that's all the time we have for this Words and Their Stories! Until next time, I'm Anna Matteo.

*Anna Matteo wrote this lesson for VOA Learning English.*

## Words in This Story

**comfortable** – *adj.* producing a relaxing feeling especially because of shape or materials:

**(at) stake** – *n.* in a position to be lost or won

**dating** – *v.* to make a usually romantic social arrangement to meet with : to have a date with

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*We want to hear from you. Do you have a similar expressions in your language? In the Comments section, you can also practice using any of the expressions from the story.*

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