

I'm not a bot

































Maggie Cramer January 22, 2021 Common Phrases Have you ever heard or read the phrase out of sight, out of mind and wondered what it meant? Scroll down now—before the article is, well, out of sight, out of mind—to discover the definition of this popular proverbial and idiomatic expression. Compose bold, clear, mistake-free, writing with Grammarly's AI-powered writing assistant This common phrase is used to say that we tend to forget about or dismiss what's outside of our immediate view—be it a person or a thing. In other words, if we don't see someone or something for a period of time, we might stop thinking about them or it, or regard the absent person or thing as less important than what or who is present and visible to us. Here are some example sentences using the saying out of sight, out of mind to help you better understand its meaning: My old friends promised they'd call me every day after I moved away, and that we'd stay as close as ever. But it's been a few months since I left, and I haven't heard from them at all. I guess it's true when they say out of sight, out of mind.I had company coming over and needed to clean the house quickly, so I put all of my mail in a drawer in the kitchen. That meant my bills were out of sight, out of mind, so I completely forgot to pay them this month. With our house, it's out of sight, out of mind for our landlord, who lives in another town. There are so many things that need to be repaired, but since he's far away and busy with other rentals in his city, our place just isn't prioritized. When I told her I had to transfer colleges, my girlfriend said she wanted to continue our relationship long distance. I was scared, since people always say out of sight, out of mind. But she assured me she could never forget me. It can be easy for people to have an out of sight, out of mind attitude about the pandemic. If they don't know anyone that's affected and there aren't many cases in their community, they can almost forget about it altogether. Unfortunately, this outlook might mean they don't take all the appropriate safety measures. The idiom is most often punctuated with a comma after sight. The Origin of the Expression Out of sight, out of mind dates all the way back to ancient Greece. Specifically, to the epic Greek poem the Odyssey, which usually carries an attribution to Homer and likely dates to the late 7th century or early 8th century BC. The poem is separated into 24 books that tell the story of Odysseus, king of Ithaca, and his trek home after the Trojan War. It was originally composed in Homeric Greek. An English translation of the section that includes the proverb reads: "He's lost and gone now—out of sight, out of mind—and I... he's left me tears and grief. Nor do I rack my heart and grieve for him alone. No longer. Now the gods have invented other miseries to plague me." Of course, the original Homeric Greek version might not have included the phrase exactly as we use it today, rather merely the idea it expresses. Language historians suggest the earliest appearance of the proverb in English is sometime in the 1500s. Most likely it was first printed in English in John Heywood's A Dialogue Conteyning the Number in Effect of All the Proverbes in the Englishe Tongue, published in the late 1540s. Understanding Idioms and Proverbs Out of sight, out of mind is both an idiom and a proverb. An idiom is a figurative expression with an intended meaning that typically can't be understood, or at least fully understood, just by looking at the individual words that comprise it. Even if you've never heard the term idiom, you have most likely heard many idiomatic expressions. If you were to consult an idioms dictionary, here are a few of the most common idioms you'd find: You're in hot water. His boss gave him the ax. It's time to face the music. You've hit the nail on the head.If you took the first example literally, you'd think it was describing a person standing in a bathtub full of hot water, perhaps. But the expression is actually used to describe a person who's in trouble. Likewise, rather than literally being handed a tool for chopping wood, if you get the ax from your boss, it means you're getting fired. It's time to face the music means that it's time to come to terms with the consequences of your actions. And when someone has hit the nail on the head, they've gotten an answer exactly right or done something exactly as it should have been done.Take out of sight, out of mind literally, and you might find yourself a bit confused. After all, you may associate the idea of being "out of mind" with being "crazy." But you now know that in the case of this expression, "out of mind" means "forgotten." You might also take "out of sight" to mean "blind," as opposed to someone or something being "outside of one's direct view." As an idiom, the phrase means that if we don't see a person or thing for some time, we tend to stop thinking about them or it at all—or as much as we once did—and start to turn our thoughts toward what or who we can see.The well-known expression is also a proverb. A proverb is a short, common phrase or saying that imparts advice or shares a universal truth. Synonyms of the term proverb include adage, aphorism, and maxim. Here are some additional examples of well-known proverbs: Blood is thicker than water. A picture is worth a thousand words. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Don't judge a book by its cover. You've certainly also seen or heard a popular proverb that's an antonym to out of sight, out of mind: absence makes the heart grow fonder. This expression means that when you spend time away and apart from someone or something, you really miss them/it and love them/it, perhaps more than you would if you were with them or it all the time. Now, you might be asking, how can both proverbs be true? While proverbs offer up a bit of general advice and wisdom, they may not be true for everyone in every single circumstance. There may be those who are quick to forget someone that's out of sight, just as there may be people who find they think of and love someone more when they're away. Which is most often the case for you: out of sight, out of mind or absence makes the heart grow fonder? Summary The expression out of sight, out of mind means that we forget what we can't see; that we tend to stop thinking about someone or something when they're/it's out of our view for a period of time—or at least we stop thinking about it/them as much as we used to in favor of the people and things that are immediately in front of us. In other words, what is out of sight becomes less important than what is within sight. For the past 15 years, I've dedicated my career to words and language, as a writer, editor, and communications specialist and as a language arts educator. I'm excited to explore all things English with you and The Word Counter! I currently reside in Asheville, North Carolina. I have a Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) in Writing, Literature, and Publishing from Emerson College and a Master of Education (MEd) in Secondary English Education from the University of Florida. You can find me on LinkedIn, or access my online portfolio here! Recent Posts Have you ever heard the phrase "Out of sight, out of mind"? This proverb holds a special place in our everyday lives, reminding us that things we don't see aren't always forgotten. In this article, we explore the meaning of "Out of sight, out of mind" and how it applies to various situations. The saying "Out of sight, out of mind" implies that when something or someone is not physically present or visible, it's easy to forget about them. It reflects a simple truth about human nature: we tend to focus on what's right in front of us and neglect things that we don't see or experience regularly. This phrase can be applied in various contexts—relationships, projects, goals, and even personal habits. However, while it speaks to a natural tendency to forget, it's not always a healthy mindset to adopt in all circumstances. Temporary Focus Shifts Imagine you're juggling multiple tasks at work. You prioritize the tasks that are urgent and right in front of you. Once a task is out of sight (perhaps completed or delayed), it no longer consumes your attention. In this case, "out of sight, out of mind" perfectly captures how we naturally focus on the present and most visible priorities. Example: "I finished the urgent project last week, and now it's out of sight, out of mind, while I tackle this new task." Relationships Over Distance This proverb often applies to relationships, especially when distance separates people. Without regular communication or physical presence, even the strongest relationships can fade over time. It's not that people deliberately forget about each other, but life tends to fill the gaps left by absence. Example: "We used to be best friends, but ever since she moved to a different city, it's been a case of 'out of sight, out of mind' for both of us." Old Habits or Hobbies Sometimes, we give up a habit or hobby unintentionally simply because it's no longer part of our routine. As soon as it's "out of sight," it fades from our thoughts, replaced by other priorities. Example: "I used to practice the guitar every day, but once I got busy with work, it became 'out of sight, out of mind.'" While the proverb is useful in many contexts, it doesn't always hold true. Here are instances where "Out of sight, out of mind" is misleading or inappropriate: Strong Emotional Bonds In deeply emotional relationships, especially between close family members, friends, or partners, distance doesn't erase feelings. People can remain on each other's minds even when physically separated. In these cases, absence often makes the heart grow fonder. Example: "Even though he's working abroad, it's not 'out of sight, out of mind' for us. We talk every day and keep our bond strong." Long-Term Goals Just because a goal isn't immediately visible doesn't mean it's forgotten. For many people, long-term goals require time and patience, and they don't vanish just because they're not in the immediate spotlight. Example: "I haven't thought about the marathon I want to run lately, but that doesn't mean it's 'out of sight, out of mind.'" It's still a goal I'm working toward, even in the background." Commitments and Responsibilities Important commitments, such as caring for a loved one or fulfilling a promise, don't disappear when they're not in front of us. Even if the task isn't physically visible, responsible individuals keep these obligations in mind. Example: "I can't just put my responsibilities 'out of sight, out of mind.'" My family depends on me, even when I'm at work." Serious Relationships It would be inappropriate and potentially hurtful to describe a serious romantic relationship or close family bond as "out of sight, out of mind." It dismisses the emotional depth involved and suggests that distance weakens the relationship, which is often not the case. Inappropriate Example: Saying "out of sight, out of mind" after your partner leaves for a business trip could be interpreted as emotionally distant or careless. Responsibilities or Promises Applying this proverb to situations where people expect reliability—such as fulfilling a work project, taking care of children, or upholding a promise—is not just inappropriate; it can be irresponsible. Inappropriate Example: "I forgot to pick up the kids from school because they were out of sight, out of mind" is not a valid excuse for shirking responsibilities. Important Causes or People in Need The phrase can sound dismissive when applied to significant causes, such as charitable work or humanitarian efforts. Just because these issues are not right in front of you doesn't mean they should be ignored. Inappropriate Example: Saying that a global issue like poverty or climate change is "out of sight, out of mind" may reflect indifference, which can come across as insensitive. While "Out of sight, out of mind" highlights a natural human tendency to forget about things that aren't immediately visible, it's not always the best way to approach important relationships, responsibilities, or long-term goals. Use this proverb when discussing trivial or temporary situations but be cautious when applying it to more significant matters. After all, some things should stay in our minds, even if they aren't always in sight. ProverbA proverb is a short, commonly known saying that offers advice or wisdom about life. In everyday English, proverbs are often used to illustrate a point quickly and effectively. For example, "The early bird catches the worm" is a proverb encouraging people to act early to succeed. FittingWhen something is described as "fitting," it means it is suitable or appropriate for a particular situation. In this article, "fitting" refers to when it's appropriate to use the proverb. In everyday language, you might say, "It's fitting to wear formal clothes to a job interview." Physical Presence"Physical presence" refers to someone or something being physically near or in sight. In this context, it highlights how being physically present affects whether or not we keep something in mind. You could use this phrase in daily life when talking about meetings or social gatherings, like "His physical presence made a big difference at the party." FadeTo "fade" means to gradually disappear or become less noticeable. In the context of this article, it's used to describe how relationships or thoughts can weaken over time. In everyday conversation, you might say, "The colors on this old shirt have faded after so many washes." Consume AttentionWhen something "consumes attention," it takes up a lot of your focus or thought. In this article, tasks that are no longer urgent no longer consume your attention. A similar example could be, "The project deadline is consuming all my attention this week." TendThe word "tend" refers to the likelihood of someone behaving in a certain way. In the context of this article, people tend to forget things when they're out of sight. In daily language, you might say, "I tend to get sleepy after lunch." Absence"Absence" means being away or not present. It is often used to talk about people or things that are missing. In the article, absence refers to people not being physically present in each other's lives. You could use it in everyday conversation like, "Her absence was noticeable at the meeting." Obligations"Obligations" refer to things that you are required to do, either legally, morally, or personally. In the article, obligations are commitments that don't disappear just because they're out of sight. For example, "I have family obligations that I must prioritize this weekend." Irresponsible"Irresponsible" describes someone who fails to act sensibly or in a way that others can rely on. In the context of the article, forgetting commitments because they are out of sight is deemed irresponsible. In daily life, you might hear, "It's irresponsible to leave your car running while unattended." Relevance"Relevance" means how closely related or important something is to a current topic or situation. In the article, the proverb's relevance is discussed in the context of relationships, tasks, and responsibilities. In everyday use, someone might say, "This point has great relevance to our discussion." Can you think of a time when "out of sight, out of mind" applied to a situation in your life? What happened, and how did it affect your relationship with that person or task? Have you ever felt that distance strengthened a relationship instead of weakening it? Why do you think that happens sometimes, even though the proverb suggests the opposite? Is there something in your life that has faded from your attention because it's not in front of you right now? How do you balance staying focused on immediate tasks while also keeping long-term goals in mind? Do you agree that some obligations, such as family or work commitments, should never be "out of sight, out of mind"? How do you keep these obligations a priority even when they're not immediately in front of you? In your opinion, are there areas of life where "out of sight, out of mind" should never be applied? How do you personally make sure that these important things stay in focus? Feel free to share your thoughts and experiences in the comments below, or discuss them with your friends and family. After all, the more we talk about how these sayings apply to real life, the more we understand their true meaning! The use of "in mind" for "remembered" and "out of mind" for "forgotten" date back to the at least the 13th century. The earliest printed citation of a link with memory and the sight of something is in John Heywood's A Dialogue conteyning the number in effect of all the Proverbes in the Englishe tongue, 1546:"Out of sight out of minde." The phrase is used as an example of the supposed comic results that early computer translation and speech recognition programmes came up with. The phrase "out of sight, out of mind" was supposed to have been translated by a computer as "invisible idiot," "blind and insane" etc. This is on a par with "computers can wreck a nice peach" (computers can recognise speech), which is also used as an example of how computers lack the general knowledge to compare with humans at speech recognition. These reports lack consistency and are too neat to be anything other than inventions. There's no evidence to support the stories but they do illustrate that although 'anyone can make a mistake, but to really fool things up you need a computer'. Even using more recent (2007) programs to translate 'out of sight, out of mind' into Russian and then back to English the best they could do was 'from the sighting, from the reason'.19th century writers must have thought that 'out of sight, out of mind' lacked something as a proverb and went to the trouble of coining its exact opposite - 'absence makes the heart grow stronger'.See also: the List of Proverbs. Also found in: Acronyms, Wikipedia. That which cannot be seen or is not noticeable will be forgotten. The boss hasn't been down to the warehouse in months, so he has no idea that there are so many issues in here. Out of sight, out of mind, I suppose. Just sweep everything under the sofa—out of sight, out of mind.Farlex Dictionary of Idioms. © 2024 Farlex, Inc. All rights reserved.Prov. If you do not see someone or something frequently, you will forget about it. (Sometimes used to imply that you will forget about people who have moved away.) Ever since I moved, none of my old friends have gotten in touch with me. It's out of sight, out of mind with them, evidently. My electric bill somehow got moved to the bottom of the stack on my desk, and I forgot all about paying it. out of sight, out of mind.McGraw-Hill Dictionary of American Idioms and Phrasal Verbs. © 2002 by The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc. If you say out of sight, out of mind, you mean that it is easy to forget about someone or something when you have not seen them for a long time. Then I went I away for six months and he lost interest. Out of sight, out of mind. We just take for granted the fact that once we've used something up we put it in that bin and away it goes — out of sight, out of mind. Note: People often vary this expression. Absent employees may miss out on promotion prospects too — out of sight may well mean out of mind.Collins COBUILD Idioms Dictionary, 3rd ed. © HarperCollins Publishers 2012 you soon forget people or things that are no longer visible or present. proverbFarlex Partner Idioms Dictionary © Farlex 2017 (saying) used to say that somebody will quickly be forgotten when they are no longer with you OPOSITE: absence makes the heart grow fonderFarlex Partner Idioms Dictionary © Farlex 2017 and OOSOOM phr. & comp. abb. I don't pay attention to what I can't see. I completely forgot about it. OOSOOM! McGraw-Hill's Dictionary of American Slang and Colloquial Expressions Copyright © 2006 by The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc. All rights reserved.What is absent is soon forgotten. This phrase has been proverbial since Homer's time. The Greek poet had it in the Odyssey (ca. 50 b.c.), and the earliest English appearance is in a 1501 translation of Thomas à Kempis's The Imitation of Christ. For the opposite sentiment, see absence makes the heart grow fonder. Out of sight, a twentieth-century slangy expression meaning "Wonderful" or "Beyond belief!" may become a cliché.The Dictionary of Clichés by Christine Ammer Copyright © 2013 by Christine AmmerSee also: Want to thank TFD for its existence? Tell a friend about us, add a link to this page, or visit the webmaster's page for free fun content. Link to this page: out of sight, out of mind "Out of sight, out of mind" means that when something or someone is not visible or present, they are easily forgotten or not thought about.I haven't seen my old friend in years, so out of sight, out of mind.Once I moved away, my ex quickly became out of sight, out of mind.If you don't keep reminding people of your accomplishments, you'll be out of sight, out of mind"Out of sight, out of mind" is a proverb. A proverb is a short saying that teaches us something important or gives us advice. Unlike an idiom, it's easy to understand even if I used figurative language. You can use "Out of sight, out of mind" to emphasize the tendency for people to forget or ignore things that are not directly in front of them. It can be used in various situations to remind someone to stay connected with people or things they care about. For example, if a friend is moving away, you might say, "Remember, 'out of sight, out of mind'." Make sure to keep in touch and maintain your friendship. I haven't seen my old friends in years. Out of sight, out of mind. It's easy to forget about people when they're not around. I always keep a picture of my family on my desk. Out of sight, out of mind. It helps me remember to stay connected with them even when we're apart.I used to have a favorite toy as a child, but I lost it and eventually forgot about it. Out of sight, out of mind.I miss my family so much since I moved away. They say absence makes the heart grow fonder.Use it or lose it! If you don't use or practice something regularly, you may forget how to do it.I used to be fluent in French, but I haven't practiced in years. Use it or lose it, as they say.Ignorance is bliss Not knowing about a problem or unpleasant situation can be more comfortable than knowing and worrying about it.Sometimes I wish I didn't know about all the problems in the world. Ignorance is bliss, they say.The origin of the phrase "Out of sight, out of mind" is unknown.Yes. "Out of sight, out of mind" is a common proverb that is often used in everyday conversation. It reflects a common human tendency and is applicable to various situations."Out of sight, out of mind" conveys a tone of caution and reminder. It serves as a gentle warning to not neglect or forget about important people or things in our lives.The proverb "Out of sight, out of mind" is commonly used in both informal and formal settings. It can be used in casual conversations among friends and family, as well as in more professional or serious contexts to emphasize the importance of staying connected and not forgetting about important matters.It is commonly used as part of a sentence to convey its full meaning. For example, "I haven't seen my old friends in years. Out of sight, out of mind." I said, "You heard me say it, you heard and listened. It also appears in the Greek poem The Odyssey, which is attributed to Homer and dates back to the early 8th century BC. An English translation reads: He's lost and gone now—out of sight, out of mind—and I... he's left me tears and grief. Nor do I rack my heart and grieve for him alone. No longer. Now the gods have invented other miseries to plague me. We know it's been used as an idiom since at least the 13th century, as it appeared in John Heywood's A Dialogue Conteyning Proverbes and Epigrammes. He said: Out of sight out of minde. Examples in Sentences Now that we've covered the meaning of this idiom and its origins, here are some example sentences that use it: After moving to a different city, my old friends seem to be out of sight, out of mind. Once the project was completed and put on the shelf, it was out of sight, out of mind for the team. The moment the toy disappeared behind the couch, the toddler lost interest—truly, out of sight, out of mind. Once we were on vacation, work-related stress dissipated; the relaxing days by the beach meant that they were out of sight, out of mind. I have a tendency to forget about tasks that are not in my immediate view—out of sight, out of mind. People often find that friendships fade when they're separated by long distances; it's a classic case of out of sight, out of mind. The old photos in the attic were out of sight for years, and with time, the memories associated with them became out of mind as well. As soon as the holiday decorations are packed away, they become out of sight, out of mind until the next festive season. The once-cherished possessions stored in the garage became out of sight, out of mind as they were replaced with new items. After changing jobs, the daily routine of the previous workplace quickly became out of sight, out of mind. Other Ways to Say "No Rest for the Wicked" There are other ways to say that the work never ends. They're great to use if you're looking for alternative phrases. Gone and forgotten What the eye doesn't see, the heart doesn't grieve over Lost to memory In the rearview mirror Faded into the background Buried in the past There's even a popular idiom that means the exact opposite. It goes: Absence makes the heart grow fonder. Concluding Thoughts That concludes this article about this popular idiom. To summarize, when you say "Out of sight, out of mind," you're saying that it's much easier to stop thinking or caring about something or someone if it's not on your radar for a while. Are you ready to learn more English phrases and expand your vocabulary? Check out our idioms blog for idioms, expressions, sayings, and more! Written By: Carly ForsaithCarly Forsaith is one of the lead freelance writers for WritingTips.org. Carly is a copywriter who has been writing about the English language for over 3 years. Before that, she was a teacher in Thailand, helping people learn English as a second language. She is a total grammar nerd and spends her time spotting language errors on signs and on the internet. The idiomatic phrase "out of sight, out of mind" is a popular idiom used to express the idea that if something is not visible or present, it's easily forgotten about or even purposely ignored. The phrase originated in the 1500s, and it's one we all use to this day. I'm sure you've used it before, but do you know the actual meaning? Let's take a look!The origin of the phrase out of sight, out of mind" is not totally clear to me, but it's thought to have originated from the simple idea that if something isn't tangibly present, then it's more difficult to think about or remember it. It's like the junk drawer in the kitchen.It can be traced back to the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle, who wrote that "memory is the residue of thought." He said what we remember boils down to what we pay attention to, and if something isn't directly in front of us, then we probably won't remember it.I could go into detail and make this more complicated than it needs to be, but it basically means that if something isn't right in front of you, then it's easier to just ignore it or pretend it doesn't even exist. We do it all the time with things we can't deal with or stuff that we want to put off until another time.I think it's worth noting that the phrase is sometimes used as a warning. It means that if something is not kept in focus, it can be forgotten. It also implies that one should pay attention to things and not let them slip away.So, we already know it's used as an idiomatic expression, and it is usually in informal or conversational contexts. You'll often see it in the form of a statement, a question, or some advice, whether in written or spoken form. I've also seen the phrase often used in the negative sense, as a warning, to remind others to pay attention to important things and not to let them slip away.I threw those bills in the junk drawer for now. Out of sight, out of mind. I'll deal with them later.After the breakup, he moved away, and she realized that out of sight, out of mind, she couldn't stop thinking about him.The company decided to outsource its customer service department and soon realized that out of sight, out of mind, they were losing customers."Out of sight, out of mind"; you definitely know we all use this popular idiom today. It expresses the idea that something is easily forgotten or ignored if it is not visible or present. You can use it negatively and positively; it just depends on the context.