

Don't bite more than you can chew

Meaning: Know your strengths and weaknesses. Don't exceed your limits.

Alternatives: Cut your coat according to your cloth.

Big mouthfuls often choke.

Illustrative Story:

The clouds were drifting in the sky. A frog sat close to a wet patch and started croaking loudly.

It thought highly of itself. "I sing well. I look smart. I have lovely big eyes.

I can leap around and catch flies by the dozen," the frog felt right on top of the world.

At that time, it saw an elephant walking along. The frog tried to tell the elephant, "Stop. Listen to my music.

Look into my green eyes. Then tell me, can you sing as well as me? Can your eyes be green?"

The elephant swung its head, from side to side, and drove away a fly which nettled it. It did not hear the croaks of the frog.

It moved on, chewing its cud. That annoyed the frog. "What does the elephant think of itself?

Doesn't even give me a nod, what to talk of a smile," the frog told itself.

Then it croaked, still more loudly, "Oh elephant! I am the greatest musician.

I was crowned the king of music by the frogs, only a few hours back.

I am ready to sing for you. Right now. What do you say?"

The elephant did not get the message, this time either. The frog lost its head.

It became terribly angry. "I think the elephant is proud of its size.

It doesn't know I can grow as big, if not bigger, if I so desire."

Then it started drawing in breath. It puffed and huffed. It held the breath. He checked.

It was still very small when compared to the elephant. "I must try a little harder," sighed the frog. Its eyes bulged out.

Its body now looked like a bloated balloon. It could puff itself no more.

Vet the frog did not stop. "I must not give up. I must show the elephant its place.

What does it think of itself?" the frog made yet another bid to take in more air.

Then the air within pressed all over. And the frog burst like a pricked balloon.

That was the end of the frog.

The frog had tried to do something beyond its limits. It had bitten more than it could chew.

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