

List of idioms and Phrases

An **idiom** is a phrase where the words together have a meaning that is different from the dictionary definitions of the individual words.

A

A Bird In The Hand Is Worth Two In The Bush:

Having something that is certain is much better than taking a risk for more, because chances are you might lose everything.

A Blessing In Disguise:

Something good that isn't recognized at first.

A Chip On Your Shoulder:

Being upset for something that happened in the past.

A Dime A Dozen:

Anything that is common and easy to get.

A Doubting Thomas:

A skeptic who needs physical or personal evidence in order to believe something.

A Drop in the Bucket:

A very small part of something big or whole.

A Fool And His Money Are Easily Parted:

It's easy for a foolish person to lose his/her money.

A House Divided Against Itself Cannot Stand:

Everyone involved must unify and function together or it will not work out.

A Leopard Can't Change His Spots:

You cannot change who you are.

A Penny Saved Is A Penny Earned:

By not spending money, you are saving money (little by little).

A Picture Paints a Thousand Words:

A visual presentation is far more descriptive than words.

A Piece of Cake:

A task that can be accomplished very easily.

A Slap on the Wrist:

A very mild punishment.

A Taste Of Your Own Medicine:

When you are mistreated the same way you mistreat others.

A Toss-Up:

A result that is still unclear and can go either way.

Actions Speak Louder Than Words:

It's better to actually do something than just talk about it.

Add Fuel To The Fire:

Whenever something is done to make a bad situation even worse than it is.

Against The Clock:

Rushed and short on time.

All Bark And No Bite:

When someone is threatening and/or aggressive but not willing to engage in a fight.

All Greek to me:

Meaningless and incomprehensible like someone who cannot read, speak, or understand any of the Greek language would be.

All In The Same Boat:

When everyone is facing the same challenges.

An Arm And A Leg:

Very expensive. A large amount of money.

An Axe To Grind:

To have a dispute with someone.

Apple of My Eye:

Someone who is cherished above all others.

As High As A Kite:

Anything that is high up in the sky.

At The Drop Of A Hat:

Willing to do something immediately.

B

Back Seat Driver:

People who criticize from the sidelines, much like someone giving unwanted advice from the back seat of a vehicle to the driver.

Back To Square One:

Having to start all over again.

Back To The Drawing Board:

When an attempt fails and it's time to start all over.

Baker's Dozen:

Thirteen.

Barking Up The Wrong Tree:

A mistake made in something you are trying to achieve.

Beat A Dead Horse:

To force an issue that has already ended.

Beating Around The Bush:

Avoiding the main topic. Not speaking directly about the issue.

Bend Over Backwards:

Do whatever it takes to help. Willing to do anything.

Between A Rock And A Hard Place:

Stuck between two very bad options.

Bite Off More Than You Can Chew:

To take on a task that is way to big.

Bite Your Tongue:

To avoid talking.

Blood Is Thicker Than Water:

The family bond is closer than anything else.

Blue Moon:

A rare event or occurrence.

Break A Leg:

A superstitious way to say 'good luck' without saying 'good luck', but rather the

opposite.

Buy A Lemon:

To purchase a vehicle that constantly gives problems or stops running after you drive it away.

C

Can't Cut The Mustard :

Someone who isn't adequate enough to compete or participate.

Cast Iron Stomach:

Someone who has no problems, complications or ill effects with eating anything or drinking anything.

Charley Horse:

Stiffness in the leg / A leg cramp.

Chew someone out:

Verbally scold someone.

Chip on his Shoulder:

Angry today about something that occurred in the past.

Chow Down:

To eat.

Close but no Cigar:

To be very near and almost accomplish a goal, but fall short.

Cock and Bull Story:

An unbelievable tale.

Come Hell Or High Water:

Any difficult situation or obstacle.

Crack Someone Up:

To make someone laugh.

Cross Your Fingers:

To hope that something happens the way you want it to.

Cry Over Spilt Milk:

When you complain about a loss from the past.

Cry Wolf:

Intentionally raise a false alarm.

Cup Of Joe:

A cup of coffee.

Curiosity Killed The Cat:

Being Inquisitive can lead you into a dangerous situation.

Cut to the Chase:

Leave out all the unnecessary details and just get to the point.

D

Dark Horse:

One who was previously unknown and is now prominent.

Dead Ringer:

100% identical. A duplicate.

Devil's Advocate:

Someone who takes a position for the sake of argument without believing in that particular side of the argument. It can also mean one who presents a counter argument for a position they do believe in, to another debater.

Dog Days of Summer:

The hottest days of the summer season.

Don't count your chickens before they hatch:

Don't rely on it until your sure of it.

Don't Look A Gift Horse In The Mouth:

When someone gives you a gift, don't be ungrateful.

Don't Put All Your Eggs In One Basket:

Do not put all your resources in one possibility.

Doozy:

Something outstanding.

Down To The Wire:

Something that ends at the last minute or last few seconds.

Drastic Times Call For Drastic Measures:

When you are extremely desperate you need to take extremely desperate actions.

Drink like a fish:

To drink very heavily.

Drive someone up the wall:

To irritate and/or annoy very much.

Dropping Like Flies:

A large number of people either falling ill or dying.

Dry Run:

Rehearsal.

E

Eighty Six:

A certain item is no longer available. Or this idiom can also mean, to throw away.

Elvis has left the building:

The show has come to an end. It's all over.

Ethnic Cleansing:

Killing of a certain ethnic or religious group on a massive scale.

Every Cloud Has A Silver Lining:

Be optimistic, even difficult times will lead to better days.

Everything But The Kitchen Sink:

Almost everything and anything has been included.

Excuse my French:

Please forgive me for cussing.

Cock and Bull Story:

An unbelievable tale.

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E

Feeding Frenzy:

An aggressive attack on someone by a group.

Field Day:

An enjoyable day or circumstance.

Finding Your Feet:

To become more comfortable in whatever you are doing.

Finger lickin' good:

A very tasty food or meal.

Fixed In Your Ways:

Not willing or wanting to change from your normal way of doing something.

Flash In The Pan:

Something that shows potential or looks promising in the beginning but fails to deliver anything in the end.

Flea Market:

A swap meet. A place where people gather to buy and sell inexpensive goods.

Flesh and Blood:

This idiom can mean living material of which people are made of, or it can refer to someone's family.

Flip The Bird:

To raise your middle finger at someone.

Foam at the Mouth:

To be enraged and show it.

Fools' Gold:

Iron pyrites, a worthless rock that resembles real gold.

French Kiss:

An open mouth kiss where tongues touch.

From Rags To Riches:

To go from being very poor to being very wealthy.

Fuddy-duddy:

An old-fashioned and foolish type of person.

Full Monty:

This idiom can mean either, "the whole thing" or "completely nude".

Funny Farm:

A mental institutional facility.

G

Get Down to Brass Tacks:

To become serious about something.

Get Over It:

To move beyond something that is bothering you.

Get Up On The Wrong Side Of The Bed:

Someone who is having a horrible day.

Get Your Walking Papers:

Get fired from a job.

Give Him The Slip:

To get away from. To escape.

Go Down Like A Lead Balloon:

To be received badly by an audience.

Go For Broke:

To gamble everything you have.

Go Out On A Limb:

Put yourself in a tough position in order to support someone/something.

Go The Extra Mile:

Going above and beyond whatever is required for the task at hand.

Good Samaritan:

Someone who helps others when they are in need, with no discussion for compensation, and no thought of a reward.

Graveyard Shift:

Working hours from about 12:00 am to 8:00 am. The time of the day when most other people are sleeping.

Great Minds Think Alike:

Intelligent people think like each other.

Green Room:

The waiting room, especially for those who are about to go on a tv or radio show.

Gut Feeling:

A personal intuition you get, especially when feel something may not be right.

H

Haste Makes Waste:

Quickly doing things results in a poor ending.

Hat Trick:

When one player scores three goals in the same hockey game. This idiom can also mean three scores in any other sport, such as 3 homeruns, 3 touchdowns, 3 soccer goals, etc.

Have an Axe to Grind:

To have a dispute with someone.

He Lost His Head:

Angry and overcome by emotions.

Head Over Heels:

Very excited and/or joyful, especially when in love.

Hell in a Handbasket:

Deteriorating and headed for complete disaster.

High Five:

Slapping palms above each others heads as celebration gesture.

High on the Hog:

Living in Luxury.

Hit The Books:

To study, especially for a test or exam.

Hit The Hay:

Go to bed or go to sleep.

Hit The Nail on the Head:

Do something exactly right or say something exactly right.

Hit The Sack:

Go to bed or go to sleep.

Hocus Pocus:

In general, a term used in magic or trickery.

Hold Your Horses:

Be patient.

!

Icing On The Cake:

When you already have it good and get something on top of what you already have.

Idle Hands Are The Devil's Tools:

You are more likely to get in trouble if you have nothing to do.

If It's Not One Thing, It's Another:

When one thing goes wrong, then another, and another...

In Like Flynn:

To be easily successful, especially when sexual or romantic.

In The Bag:

To have something secured.

In The Buff:

Nude.

In The Heat Of The Moment:

Overwhelmed by what is happening in the moment.

In Your Face:

An aggressive and bold confrontation.

It Takes Two To Tango:

A two person conflict where both people are at fault.

It's A Small World:

You frequently see the same people in different places.

It's Anyone's Call:

A competition where the outcome is difficult to judge or predict.

Ivy League:

Since 1954 the Ivy League has been the following universities: Columbia, Brown, Cornell, Dartmouth, Yale, Pennsylvania, Princeton, and Harvard.

J

Jaywalk:

Crossing the street (from the middle) without using the crosswalk.

Joshing Me:

Tricking me.

K

Keep An Eye On Him:

You should carefully watch him.

Keep body and soul together:

To earn a sufficient amount of money in order to keep yourself alive .

Keep your chin up:

To remain joyful in a tough situation.

Kick The Bucket:

Die.

Kitty-corner:

Diagonally across. Sometimes called Catty-Corner as well.

Knee Jerk Reaction:

A quick and automatic response.

Knock On Wood:

Knuckle tapping on wood in order to avoid some bad luck.

Know the Ropes:

To understand the details.

L

Last but not least:

An introduction phrase to let the audience know that the last person mentioned is no less important than those introduced before him/her.

Lend Me Your Ear:

To politely ask for someone's full attention.

Let Bygones Be Bygones:

To forget about a disagreement or argument.

Let Sleeping Dogs Lie:

To avoid restarting a conflict.

Let The Cat Out Of The Bag:

To share a secret that wasn't suppose to be shared.

Level playing field:

A fair competition where no side has an advantage.

Like a chicken with its head cut off:

To act in a frenzied manner.

Liquor someone up:

To get someone drunk.

Long in the Tooth:

Old people (or horses).

Loose Cannon:

Someone who is unpredictable and can cause damage if not kept in check.

M

Make No Bones About:

To state a fact so there are no doubts or objections.

Method To My Madness:

Strange or crazy actions that appear meaningless but in the end are done for a good reason.

Mumbo Jumbo:

Nonsense or meaningless speech.

Mum's the word:

To keep quiet. To say nothing.

N

Nest Egg:

Savings set aside for future use.

Never Bite The Hand That Feeds You:

Don't hurt anyone that helps you.

New kid on the block:

Someone new to the group or area.

New York Minute:

A minute that seems to go by quickly, especially in a fast paced environment.

No Dice:

To not agree. To not accept a proposition.

No Room to Swing a Cat:

An unusually small or confined space.

Not Playing With a Full Deck:

Someone who lacks intelligence.

O

Off On The Wrong Foot:

Getting a bad start on a relationship or task.

Off The Hook:

No longer have to deal with a tough situation.

Off the Record:

Something said in confidence that the one speaking doesn't want attributed to him/her.

On Pins And Needles:

Anxious or nervous, especially in anticipation of something.

On The Fence:

Undecided.

On The Same Page:

When multiple people all agree on the same thing.

Out Of The Blue:

Something that suddenly and unexpectedly occurs.

Out On A Limb:

When someone puts themselves in a risky situation.

Out On The Town:

To enjoy yourself by going out.

Over My Dead Body:

When you absolutely will not allow something to happen.

Over the Top:

Very excessive.

P

Pass The Buck:

Avoid responsibility by giving it to someone else.

Pedal to the metal:

To go full speed, especially while driving a vehicle.

Peeping Tom:

Someone who observes people in the nude or sexually active people, mainly for his own gratification.

Pick up your ears:

To listen very carefully.

Pig In A Poke:

A deal that is made without first examining it.

Pig Out :

To eat alot and eat it quickly.

Pipe Down:

To shut-up or be quiet.

Practice Makes Perfect:

By constantly practicing, you will become better.

Pull the plug:

To stop something. To bring something to an end.

Pulling Your Leg:

Tricking someone as a joke.

Put a sock in it:

To tell noisy person or a group to be quiet.

Q

Queer the pitch:

Destroy or ruin a plan.

R

Raincheck:

An offer or deal that is declined right now but willing to accept later.

Raining Cats and Dogs:

A very loud and noisy rain storm.

Ring Fencing:

Separated usual judgement to guarantee protection, especially project funds.

Rise and Shine:

Time to get out of bed and get ready for work/school.

Rome Was Not Built In One Day:

If you want something to be completely properly, then its going to take time.

Rule Of Thumb:

A rough estimate.

Run out of steam:

To be completely out of energy.

S

Saved By The Bell:

Saved at the last possible moment.

Scapegoat:

Someone else who takes the blame.

Scot-free:

To escape and not have to pay.

Sick As A Dog:

To be very sick (with the flu or a cold).

Sitting Shotgun:

Riding in the front passenger seat of a car.

Sixth Sense:

A paranormal sense that allows you to communicate with the dead.

Skid Row:

The rundown area of a city where the homeless and drug users live.

Smell A Rat:

To detect someone in the group is betraying the others.

Smell Something Fishy:

Detecting that something isn't right and there might be a reason for it.

Son of a Gun:

A scamp.

Southpaw:

Someone who is left-handed.

Spitting Image:

The exact likeness or kind.

Start From Scratch:

To do it all over again from the beginning.

I

The Ball Is In Your Court:

It is your decision this time.

The Best Of Both Worlds:

There are two choices and you have them both.

The Bigger They Are The Harder They Fall:

While the bigger and stronger opponent might be a lot more difficult to beat, when you do they suffer a much bigger loss.

The Last Straw:

When one small burden after another creates an unbearable situation, the last straw is the last small burden that one can take.

The Whole Nine Yards:

Everything. All of it.

Third times a charm:

After no success the first two times, the third try is a lucky one.

Tie the knot:

To get married.

Til the cows come home:

A long time.

To Make A Long Story Short:

Something someone would say during a long and boring story in order to keep his/her audience from losing attention. Usually the story isn't shortened.

To Steal Someone's Thunder:

To take the credit for something someone else did.

Tongue And Cheek:

humor, not to be taken serious.

Turn A Blind Eye:

Refuse to acknowledge something you know is real or legit.

Twenty three skidoo:

To be turned away.

U

Under the weather:

Feeling ill or sick.

Up a blind alley:

Going down a course of action that leads to a bad outcome.

Use Your Loaf:

Use your head. Think smart.

V

Van Gogh's ear for music:

Tone deaf.

Variety Is The Spice Of Life:

The more experiences you try the more exciting life can be.

W

Wag the Dog:

A diversion away from something of greater importance.

Water Under The Bridge:

Anything from the past that isn't significant or important anymore.

Wear Your Heart On Your Sleeve:

To openly and freely express your emotions.

When It Rains, It Pours:

Since it rarely rains, when it does it will be a huge storm.

When Pigs Fly :

Something that will never ever happen.

Wild and Woolly:

Uncultured and without laws.

Wine and Dine:

When somebody is treated to an expensive meal.

Without A Doubt:

For certain.

X

X marks the spot:

A phrase that is said when someone finds something he/she has been looking for.

Y

You Are What You Eat:

In order to stay healthy you must eat healthy foods.

You Can't Judge A Book By Its Cover:

Decisions shouldn't be made primarily on appearance.

You Can't Take it With You:

Enjoy what you have and not what you don't have, since when you die you cannot take things (such as money) with you.

Your Guess Is As Good As Mine:

I have no idea.

Z

Zero Tolerance:

No crime or law breaking