### **What are idioms?**

An idiom is a group of words with a special meaning. Native English speakers learn idioms naturally from a young age, but learners of English have to study them. You might already know the meaning of every word in an idiom, but this doesn’t mean you’ll know what the idiom means. For example, if you haven’t learned the idiom call it a day, you won’t know what someone you work with means if they say “Let’s call it a day”. Even if you know what the words let’s, call and day mean, you won’t know what they’re saying. But if you’ve learned the idiom, you’ll know that they’re saying it’s time everyone finished work for the day.

### **Is learning idioms important?**

Yes. Idioms are very common in both spoken and written English, so learning them is very important. Native speakers often use idioms when they’re speaking, so if you haven’t studied idioms you’ll have trouble understanding what they’re saying. Idioms are also very common in written English. They’re used in textbooks and novels, comics and news feeds, business letters and work emails, and so on. If you need to understand written English, or if you want to write natural-sounding English, you have to learn idioms.

About Idioms.

An idiom is a group of words in current usage having a meaning that is not deducible from those of the individual words. For example, "to rain cats and dogs" - which means "to rain very heavily" - is an idiom; and "over the moon" - which means "extremely happy" - is another idiom. In both cases, you would have a hard time understanding the real meaning if you did not already know these idioms!

There are two features that identify an idiom: firstly, we cannot deduce the meaning of the idiom from the individual words; and secondly, both the grammar and the vocabulary of the idiom are fixed, and if we change them we lose the meaning of the idiom. Thus the idiom "pull your socks up" means "improve the way you are behaving" (or it can have a literal meaning); if we change it grammatically to "pull your sock up" (singular sock) or we change its vocabulary to "pull your stockings up", then we must interpret the phrase literally - it has lost its idiomatic meaning.

How should one index an idioms reference? Do we list the idiom "kick the bucket" under K for "kick" or B for "bucket"? Given that Internet users have the option of searching for individual words with the search function, the approach we have taken is to list all idioms in strict alphabetical order, omitting the indefinite and definite articles (a, an, the) and some pronouns if they occur at the beginning of the idiom. Thus, for example, the idiom "kick the bucket" is indexed under K, while the idiom "a ballpark figure" is indexed under B.

Many idioms originated as quotations from well-known writers such as Shakespeare. For example, "at one fell swoop" comes from *Macbeth* and "cold comfort" from *King John*. Sometimes such idioms today have a meaning that has been altered from the original quotation.

Some idioms are typically used in one version of English rather than another. For example, the idiom "yellow journalism" originated and is used in American English. Other idioms may be used in a slightly different form in different varieties of English. Thus the idiom "a drop in the ocean" in British and Australian English becomes "a drop in the bucket" in American English. However, in general, globalization and the effects of film, television and the Internet mean that there is less and less distinction between idioms of different varieties of English. In this reference we have tagged an idiom with one variety of English or another only when the idiom really is restricted to a particular variety of English or to indicate that the idiom originated in that particular variety of English.

# What is the meaning of "have a blast"?

## The meaning of "have a blast" is:

have a great time

Example Sentences:

Have fun on your vacation, I hope you **have a blast**.

A: How was your class?  
B: I **had a blast**! My teacher, Mike, is so great!

Dear Mom,  
I am **having a blast** here in Canada. I hope to see you soon!  
Love,  
Son

# What is the meaning of "ditch someone"?

## The meaning of "ditch someone" is:

to break plans with someone without telling them

Example Sentences:

A: Is Willy coming to the party tonight?  
B: Yeah.  
A: I hate him so much! Do you want to **ditch him**?  
B: Sure! Let’s leave him at the library!

Tammy is mad at her boyfriend because he was always **ditching her** to meet his friends.

I was supposed to meet my friends to see Dark Knight last night, but they **ditched me**! I’m so mad!

# What is the meaning of "check in with"?

## The meaning of "check in with" is:

to talk to someone to let them know that you are okay

Example Sentences:

Teenager: Mom, I’m going camping for the weekend! I’ll see you on Monday.  
Mom: Okay! Don’t forget to **check in with** me. Give me a call!

The travelling businessman **checked in with** his wife when he arrived at his hotel.

Husband: Our son called today.  
Wife: From his European vacation?  
Husband: Yes. He was just **checking in with** us.  
Wife: Is he okay?  
Husband: He needs money.

# What is the meaning of "have a row with someone"?

## The meaning of "have a row with someone" is:

to fight with someone

Example Sentences:

A: Why are you late for the party?  
B: I **had a row with my parents**! They wouldn’t let me take the car!  
A: That’s terrible!

I’m **having a row with** my landlord because he refuses to fix my broken toilet!

I **had a row with** my girlfriend last night. We’re always fighting!

# What is the meaning of "nail it"?

## The meaning of "nail it" is:

to do something perfectly or successfully

Example Sentences:

Good luck on your performance today, Jimmy. I hope you **nail it**!

Yes! I **nailed it**! Shouted the happy football player after the important goal.

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| **ring a *bell*** | If something *rings a bell*, it sounds familiar, but you don't remember the exact details. *John Bentley? The name rings a bell but I don't remember him.* |
| ***chime* in** | If you *chime in*, you interrupt or join a conversation, especially to repeat or agree with something. *While I was explaining to the bus driver what had happened, the other passengers chimed in and gave their version.* |
| ***drum*(sthg) into someone's head** | If you teach something to someone through constant repetition, you *drum it into their head*. *When we were kids at school, multiplication tables were drummed into our heads.* |
| **as fit as a *fiddle*** | A person who is*as fit as a fiddle* is in an excellent state of health or physical condition. *My grandfather is nearly ninety but he's as fit as a fiddle.* |
| **play second *fiddle*** | If you *play second fiddle* to someone, you accept to be second in importance to that person, or have a lower position. *When Charles became chairman of the family business, his brother declared that he would rather leave than play second fiddle to him.* |
| ***fiddling* while Rome burns** | If you say that someone is*fiddling while Rome burns*, you mean that they are doing unimportant things while there are serious matters to be dealt with. *His visit to the trade fair was "fiddling while Rome burns" according to the strikers.* |
| **jazz something up** | If you*jazz something up,* you add something to try to improve it or make it more stylish. *The dress needs a scarf or a necklace to jazz it up.* |
| **all that *jazz*** | This expression means 'all that stuff', 'other similar things', or 'everything of that kind'. *Let's get out the tinsel, the fairy lights and all that jazz to decorate the Christmas tree.* |
| ***music* to one's ears** | To say that something is *music to your ears* means that the information you receive makes you feel very happy. *His compliments were music to my ear.* |
| **face the *music*** | When a person has to *face the music*, they have to accept the unpleasant consequences of their actions. *He was caught stealing. Now he has to face the music.* |
| **strike a false *note*** | If you *strike a false note*, you do something wrong or inappropriate. *He struck a wrong note when he arrived at the cocktail party wearing old jeans.* |
| **strike (or hit) the right*note*** | If you *strike (or hit) the right note*, you do something suitable or appropriate. *He struck the right note with his future mother-in-low when he brought her a book on gardening - her favourite hobby!* |
| **(sound) like a broken*record*** | Someone who says the same thing again and again sounds*like a broken record.* *Dad! Stop telling me to be careful when I drive. You sound like a broken record!* |
| **go for a*song*** | If something*goes for a song*, it is sold at an unexpectedly low price. |
| ***tickle* the ivories** | This is a humorous way of talking about playing the piano. *My grandfather loves playing the piano. He tickles the ivories whenever he gets the chance.* |
| **call the *tune*** | The person who *calls the tune* makes all the important decisions and is in control of the situation. *He shows a lot of authority but in fact it's his wife who calls the tune.* |
| **sing a different *tune*** | If someone *sings a different tune*, they change their opinion about something or their attitude towards something. *He had no consideration for people out of work until he lost his own job; now he's singing a different tune.* |
| **fine*tuning*** | Small changes to something to improve it or make it work better are called fine-tuning. *We are still fine tuning our new website and appreciate your patience.* |
| **blow the *whistle*** | If you report an illegal or socially-harmful activity to the authorities, and give information about those responsible for it, you *blow the whistle,* or you are a *whistle-blower*. *He refused to blow the whistle on his boss for fear of losing his job.* |
| **clean as a *whistle*** | Something*as clean as a whistle* is extremely clean. This can also mean that a person's criminal record is clean. *Bob spent the afternoon washing and shining his car until it was as clean as a whistle.* |

*English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions*

***Actions - Behaviour***

**(idioms :    accidentally on purpose  → binge drinking)**

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| **accidentally on purpose** | If you do something intentionally, but pretend it was an accident, you do it *accidentally on purpose.*  *I accidentally-on-purpose erased his email address, so I couldn't contact him again.* | |
| **add fuel to the flames** | If you*add fuel to the flames*, you do or say something that makes a difficult situation even worse. *He forgot their wedding anniversary, and his apologies only added fuel to the flames*. | |
| **all ears** | To say that you are*all ears* means that you are listening very attentively. *Of course I want to know - I'm all ears!* | |
| **answer call of nature nature's call** | When a person *answers the call of nature*, they go to the toilet. *I had to get up in the middle of the night to answer the call of nature.* | |
| **backseat driver** | A passenger in a car who gives unwanted advice to the driver is called a *backseat driver. I can't stand backseat drivers like my mother-in-law!* | |
| **badger someone** | If you *badger someone*into doing something, you persistently nag or pester them until you obtain what you want. *Sophie badgered her parents into buying her a new computer.* | |
| **balancing act** | When you try to satisfy two or more people or groups who have different needs, and keep everyone happy, you perform a *balancing act.* *Many people, especially women,  have to perform a balancing act between work and family.* | |
| **bare your heart / soul** | If you *bare you soul* (or heart) to someone, you reveal your innermost thoughts and feelings to them. *Mike couldn't keep things to himself any longer. He decided to bare his soul to his best friend.* | |
| **bark up wrong tree** | A person who is *barking up the wrong tree* is doing the wrong thing, because their beliefs or ideas are incorrect or mistaken.  *The police are barking up the wrong tree if they think Joey stole the car - he can't drive!* | |
| **beat a (hasty) retreat** | Someone who*beats a (hasty) retreat* runs away or goes back hurriedly to avoid a dangerous or difficult situation. *The thief beat a hasty retreat as soon as he saw the security officer.* | |
| **one's best bet** | The action most likely to succeed is called one's *best bet. Your best bet would be to try calling him at home.* | |
| **bide your time** | If you *bide your time*, you wait for a good opportunity to do something. *He's not hesitating, he's just biding his time, waiting for the price to drop.* | |
| **binge drinking** | This term refers to heavy drinking where large quantities of alcohol are consumed in a short space of time, often among young people in rowdy groups. *Binge drinking is becoming a major problem in some European countries.* | |
| **bite hand that feeds you** | If you bite the hand that feeds you, you are unfriendly or do harm to someone who is kind to you. *If you say bad things about the person who gives you a job, you bite the hand that feeds you.* |
| **blot one's copy book** | Someone who blots their copy-book does something to spoil their good record or reputation. *He blotted his copy-book when he was arrested for speeding.* |
| **on the bottle** | A person who drinks alcohol often and regularly is on the bottle. *John went on the bottle when he lost his job.* |
| **break every rule in the book** | If you behave in a completely unacceptable way, you break every rule in the book. *Our competitors obtained the contract by breaking every rule in the book.* |
| **breathe down neck** | If someone is breathing down your neck, they are watching you too closely and making you feel uncomfortable. *The atmosphere at work is not great; the boss keeps breathing down our necks all the time.* |
| **build bridges** | If a person builds bridges between opposing groups, they help them to cooperate and understand each other better. *A mediator is trying to build bridges between the local community and the owners of the new plant.* |
| **burn your bridges** | If you burn your bridges, you do something that will be impossible to rectify in the future. *If you refuse the offer, be careful not to burn your bridges by insulting them.  They may make a better proposal later.* |
| **burn the candle at both ends** | If you burn the candle at both ends, you exhaust yourself by doing too much, especially going to bed late and getting up early. *Scott looks exhausted - I'll bet he's been burning the candle at both ends lately.* |
| **burn your fingers** | If you burn your fingers (or *get your fingers burnt*), you suffer financially as a result of foolish behaviour. Jack got his fingers burnt playing on the stock market. |
| **bury head in sand** | If you bury your head in the sand, you refuse to face the unpleasant reality by pretending that the situation doesn't exist. *It's no good burying your head in the sand. We've got a problem on our hands.* |
| **bury the hatchet** | When people who have had a disagreement decide to forget their quarrel and become friends again, they bury the hatchet. *I didn't agree with my colleague's decision, but for the sake of peace I decided to bury the hatchet.* |
| **butter somebody up** | When you butter someone up, you flatter them or you are very nice to them, especially if you want to obtain something. *He was so keen to get the job that he spent his time buttering up the boss.* |
| **cap in hand** | If you do something cap in hand, you ask for something in a very respectful manner. *They went to the teacher, cap in hand, and asked for more time to complete their project.* |
| **carrot and stick** | If you use a carrot-and-stick approach, you use the promise of reward and the threat of punishment to make someone work harder. *Some parents use a carrot-and-stick approach to obtain good results from their children.* |
| **chance something / take a chance on** | If you take a chance on something, you take action in the hope of success even though you know that the result may be negative. *I may not be able to get through the traffic, but I'll take a chance on it.* |
| **chance one's arm** | If you chance your  arm, you decide to do something even though there is little hope of success. *Tony knew there was little hope of getting into Harvard but he decided to chance his arm anyway.* |
| **cheap shot** | A cruel, unfair or unwarranted comment or verbal attack is called a cheap shot. *Referring to Tom as an 'unqualified speaker' was really a cheap shot.* |
| **chime in** | If you chime in, you interrupt or join a conversation, especially to repeat or agree with something. *As I explained to the bus driver what had happened, the other passengers chimed in and gave their version.* |
| **clip someone's wings** | If you clip someone's wings, you do something to restrict their freedom. *Taking away his credit card is a sure way to clip his wings.* |
| **come apart at the seams** | To say that someone is coming apart at the seams means that they are extremely upset or under severe mental stress. *Bob has had so many problems lately, he's coming apart at the seams.* |
| **come out of woodwork** | When things, or people, come out of the woodwork, they appear or emerge unexpectedly, as if from nowhere, and usually in large numbers. *As soon as we added the swimming pool, our children had 'friends' coming out of the woodwork!* |
| **cramp someone's style** | If you cramp someone's style you do something to prevent them from behaving freely, or performing to the best of their ability.  *I can't paint with people watching me - it cramps my style!.* |
| **cross the Rubicon** | If you cross the Rubicon, you make an irreversible decision or commit to a course of action that cannot be changed. *After careful consideration, he decided to stop teaching and open an art gallery, knowing that he was crossing the Rubicon.* |
| **cut the cackle** | If you tell a group of people to cut the cackle, you are asking them  to stop talking aimlessly and start dealing with more important or serious matters. *OK. It's time to cut the cackle and get down to business* |
| **dance attendance** | If you dance attendance on somebody, you are constantly available for that person and attend to their wishes. *She's rich and famous and expects everyone to dance attendance on her.* |
| **dig one's own grave** | A person who digs their own grave does something which causes their own downfall. *If you drop out of college now, with such high unemployment, you'll be digging your own grave.* |
| **disappear into thin air** | If someone or something disappears into thin air, they vanish in a mysterious way. *After being accused of embezzlement, the director disappeared into thin air.* |
| **dive in headfirst** | If you begin something enthusiastically, without thinking about the possible consequences, you dive in headfirst. *Tony accepted the project without realizing the time it would take; he always dives in headfirst!* |
| **do a disappearing act** | If someone does a disappearing act, they simply vanish, especially if they have done something wrong or dishonest. *Just before the police arrived, the suspect did a disappearing act.* |
| **do a moonlight flit** | Someone who does a moonlight flit leaves a place quickly and in secret, usually to avoid paying debts. *Just before the rent was due he did a moonlight flit.* |
| **do more harm than good** | If the effect of an action is more damaging than helpful, it does more harm than good. *Giving him money did more harm than good - he spent it on alcohol.* |
| **do a good turn** | If you do someone a good turn, you act in a helpful way. *Mike is a great guy - always ready to do a good turn.* |
| **the done thing** | The correct way to behave in a particular social situation is called the done thing. *Wearing jeans to play golf is not the done thing.* |
| **drag your feet** | If you drag your feet, you delay a decision or participate without any real enthusiasm. *The government is dragging its feet on measures to reduce pollution.* |
| **drop names** | When you drop names, you mention the names of famous people you know or have met in order to impress others. *There goes Jack dropping names again.  People will get tired of listening to him!* |
| **eat crow** | If you eat crow, you admit that you were wrong about something and apologize. *He had no option but to eat crow and admit that his analysis was wrong.* |
| **eat dirt** | If you eat dirt, you are forced to accept another person's bad treatment or insulting remarks. *As a consequence of the strike, the employees had to eat dirt.* |
| **eat out of house and home** | This is a humorous way of saying that someone is eating large quantities of your food. *I stock up with food when my teenage sons invite their friends over. They'd eat you out of house and home!* |
| **eat out of someone's hand** | If you eat out of somebody's hand, you are eager to please and will accept to do anything that person asks. *She is so persuasive that she has people eating out of her hand in no time.* |
| **ego trip** | If you do something primarily to draw attention to yourself and feel important or superior to others, you are on an ego trip. *His speech about creating an association to help the underprivileged was one long ego trip.* |
| **err on side of caution** | When uncertain about what to do, if you err on the side of caution you do more than what is adequate rather than take any risks. *When I'm not sure how much food to prepare, I tend to err on the side of caution and prepare far too much.* |
| **excuse/pardon my French** | This expression is used as an apology for using crude or offensive language. *He's a bloody nuisance, if you'll excuse my French.* |
| **fall over backwards** | If you fall over backwards to accomplish something, you do everything you possibly can to please and impress. *Sally's mother fell over backwards to make her wedding reception a memorable event.* |
| **false move** | In a dangerous or risky situation, if you make a false move, you do something which may have unpleasant consequences. *He is under close surveillance. If he makes one false move he'll be arrested.* |
| **feed the kitty** | If you feed the kitty, you contribute to a collection of money called a 'kitty' in order to help a good cause. *Come on! Every little helps. You should feed the kitty for a good cause!* |
| **fiddling while Rome burns** | To say that someone is fiddling while Rome burns means that they are doing unimportant things while there are serious problems to be dealt with. *His visit to the trade fair was 'fiddling while Rome burns' according to the strikers*. |
| **fight a losing battle** | If someone is fighting a losing battle, they are trying to do something even when there is little chance of succeeding. *The headmaster is fighting a losing battle trying to ban mobile phones at school.* |
| **fight shy** | If you fight shy of something, such as a task, a problem or a duty, you want to avoid doing it or you are unwilling to confront it. *He had money problems for years but he fought shy of asking his children for help.* |
| **fish for compliments** | When someone is obviously waiting for you to say something nice, they are fishing for compliments. *I know why she invited us to her new house - she's just fishing for compliments.* |
| **fling oneself into something** | If you fling yourself into an activity, you do it with a lot of energy and enthusiasm. *Ever since she flung herself in the anti-pollution campaign, she rarely has a free moment!* |
| **follow one's nose** | If you follow your nose, you go straight ahead. This can also mean to follow your instinct in life. *The station is at the end of the road - just follow your nose.* |
| **follow in someone's footsteps** | If you follow in someone's footsteps, for example a parent, you lead a similar life or do the same job. *Lily followed in her her mother's footsteps and became a teacher.* |
| **foul one's own nest** | If you act in a way that harms your own interests, your position or your reputation, you foul your own nest. *He fouled his own nest by wrongly accusing his boss.* |
| **freeze somebody out** | If you deliberately isolate someone or prevent them from participating in a social or business activity by treating them unfairly or harshly, you freeze them out. *Pablo was treated unfairly. He was frozen out of the project by the rest of the team.* |
| **french leave** | If you leave an official or social event without notifying the person who invited you, you take French leave. *Is Bill coming back for the closing speech or has he taken French leave?* |
| **freudian slip** | A Freudian slip is a mistake made by a speaker which is considered to reveal their true thoughts or feelings. *So you got the job - I'm so sad ...  Sorry, I mean 'glad'!* |
| **gatecrash** | If someone gatecrashes, they attend a private social event without being invited. *We need volunteers to keep an eye out for gatecrashers tonight.* |
| **get on your high horse** | If you get on your high horse, you start behaving in a haughty manner, as though you should be treated with more respect. *He got on his high horse when he was asked to show his membership card.* |
| **give as good as you get** | This expression means that you are prepared to treat people as badly as they treat you, and fight for your beliefs. |
| **give the cold shoulder** | To give someone the cold shoulder means to deliberately ignore them. *After giving my opinion, he gave me the cold shoulder.* |
| **give a hard time** | If you give someone a hard time, you annoy them or make things difficult for them. *Susan says the pupils in her new school are giving her a hard time.* |
| **give a run for money** | If you give someone a run for their money, you present strong competition in circumstances where the other person expects to win easily. *We didn't win the match but we gave the other team a run for their money*. |
| **give the run-around** | If someone gives you the run-around, they deliberately give you confusing information or evasive answers. *I'm trying to contact the manager, but every time I call the firm I'm given the run-around.* |
| **give shirt off one's back** | This expression is used to describe a kind-hearted or generous person who would give you anything he/she owns to help you. *Mike would give the shirt off  his back to help a friend in difficulty.* |
| **give the slip** | If you give the slip to somebody who is following you, you manage to hide or get away from them. *The police were on his trail, but he managed to give them the slip.* |
| **give taste of own medicine** | If you give someone a taste of their own medicine, you treat them in the same unpleasant way that they have treated you. *People who always arrive late should be given a taste of their own medicine.* |
| **go through motions** | If someone goes through the motions, they do something because they have to, but without enthusiasm. *After his wife died, he tried to continue life as before, but he just went through the motions.* |
| **go too far** | If you go too far, you do something that is considered extreme or unacceptable. *Stealing is bad, but stealing from a poor person is really going too far!* |
| **go into overdrive** | If someone or something goes into overdrive, they begin to work very hard or start to perform intensely. *At the start of every new collection my imagination goes into overdrive.* |
| **go off on a tangent** | If someone goes off on a tangent, they change the subject completely in the middle of a speech or conversation. *Sometimes when he's teaching, he goes off on a tangent and starts talking about his dog!* |
| **go off the rails** | If someone goes off the rails, they go out of control and begin to behave in a manner that is unacceptable to society. *Given the unstable environment, it's a miracle that none of their children ever went off the rails.* |
| **go out of your way** | If you go out of your way, you take particular care or make a special effort when doing something. Aunt Betty went out of her way to make us feel comfortable. |
| **go to extremes** | People who go to extremes behave in a way that lacks moderation. *My parents tend to go to extremes.  They live on a tight budget and then they go on expensive holidays!* |
| **go to pieces** | If you go to pieces, for example after a terrible shock, you are so upset or distressed that you cannot lead a normal life. *Jack nearly went to pieces when his son died in a car crash.* |
| **go with the flow** | If you go with the flow, you follow the general tendency and go along with whatever happens. *When my colleagues organise an office party, I just go with the flow.* |
| **grease the skids** | When you grease the skids, you facilitate something or smooth the way for its success. *Lunch was organised for the delegates before the meeting in order to grease the skids for the negotiations.* |
| **grin and bear it** | When faced with a difficult or unpleasant situation, if you say that someone will have to grin and bear it, you mean that they will have to accept it without complaining. *The only seat available is on a low-cost flight.  You'll just have to grin and bear it!* |
| **groan inwardly** | If you groan inwardly, you feel like expressing despair, disapproval or distress, but you remain silent. *On his return, when Pete saw the pile of files on his desk, he groaned inwardly.* |
| **haul over the coals** | If you haul someone over the coals,you reprimand them harshly because they have done something wrong or incorrectly. *He was hauled over the coals for the poor quality of his presentation.* |
| **have one too many** | Someone who has one too many, has drunk too much alcohol. *I think Tony has had one too many - he's talking rubbish!* |
| **have the nerve** | If you do something rude, impudent or inappropriate, without any embarrassment or shyness, it is said that you have the nerve to do it. *She had the nerve to attend the ceremony wearing jeans!* |
| **have a stab at** | If you have a stab at something, you try something that you have never had a chance to do before. *I had a stab at surfing once but I decided not to renew the experience!* |
| **help a lame dog** | If you help a lame dog over a stile, you help someone who is in difficulty or trouble. *You can trust him - he's always ready to help a lame dog over a stile.* |
| **herd mentality** | People with the herd mentality tend to do what everyone else does, no matter how ridiculous or stupid. *One example of herd mentality is when people rush to get on the first bus when there are several empty ones waiting.* |
| **hit below the belt** | If you do something considered to be unfair, or make a cruel remark, you hit below the belt. *Politicians sometimes use personal information to hit their rivals below the belt.* |
| **hit the panic button** | When you hit or press the panic button, you raise the alarm too quickly or react too hastily in a difficult or stressful situation. *Calm down! There's no need to hit the panic button yet!* |
| **hold the fort** | When you hold the fort, you look after a place or a business in the absence of the person who is normally in charge. *Rosie, could you hold the fort please while I go to the post office?* |
| **hold one's own** | If you can hold your own, you are well able to defend yourself when under attack. *We should ask Jane to represent us; she can hold her own in any argument.* |
| **hue and cry** | If there is a hue and cry about something, there is loud opposition to it. *There will no doubt be a great hue and cry when the reorganisation is announced.* |
| **jump in the deep end** | When you jump in (or are thrown in) at the deep end, you do something without any help or preparation, in an area where you have little or no experience. *He got a job as a salesman, for which he had no training, so he just had to jump in at the deep end.* |
| **keep one's feet on the ground** | A person who keeps their feet on the ground continues to act in a sensible and practical way, even if they become successful. *His invention was an instant success but he kept his feet on the ground and invested his money very wisely*. |
| **keep fingers crossed** | If you keep your fingers crossed, you hope that something will be successful. *I'm doing my driving test tomorrow.  Keep your fingers crossed for me!* |
| **keep a level head** | If you keep a level head,  you remain calm and sensible no matter  how difficult or distressful the situation may be. *All through the hijacking the pilot kept a level  head.* |
| **keep nose clean** | A person who keeps their nose clean behaves well and avoids trouble. *He spent a term in prison a few years ago but he's kept his nose clean ever since.* |
| **keep nose to grindstone** | A person who keeps their nose to the grindstone is someone who concentrates on working  or studying hard. *She was so determined to get into the college of her choice that she kept her nose to the grindstone all year.* |
| **keep someone posted** | If someone asks you to keep them posted, they want you to keep them informed about a situation. *Our agent promised to keep us posted on developments in the negotiations.* |
| **keep in proportion** | If you react to a situation in a sensible way, without exaggerating the importance or seriousness of the facts, you keep things in proportion. *Yes, we've got a problem, but let's try to keep things in proportion.* |
| **kick up a fuss** | A person who kicks up a fuss creates a disturbance, especially by complaining or protesting about something. *The service was so slow in the restaurant that several customers began to kick up a fuss.* |
| **kill two birds with one stone** | If you kill two birds with the one stone, you succeed in doing two things at the same time. *By studying on the train on the way home, Claire kills two birds with one stone.* |
| **kill with kindness** | When you are excessive in your efforts to be helpful or generous, you can harm someone, or kill them with kindness. *The children are overweight, but their grandmother continues to give them chocolates and cookies - she'll kill them with kindness!* |
| **lash out** | If you lash out at somebody, you attack them, usually verbally. *On the ninth hole, Pete suddenly lashed out at Scott and accused him of cheating.* |
| **laugh something off** | When you laugh about something that has upset or hurt you, to make it seem less important or to try to show that you do not care, you laugh it off. *She overheard her colleague's critical remark, but she laughed it off.* |
| **laugh up your sleeve** | If you laugh up your sleeve, you are secretly amused at another person's problems or difficulties. *Tom felt that his demonstration was confusing and that his colleague was laughing up his sleeve.* |
| **leave well alone** | If you leave well alone, you decide not to interfere with or change something that is acceptable or adequate. *It would be hard to get a better deal.  Let's just leave well alone.* |
| **lend oneself to** | If you lend yourself to something, you approve of it or become associated with it. *No decent father would lend himself to violent behaviour.* |
| **let off steam** | A person who lets off steam releases surplus energy or strong feelings either through intense physical activity or by talking in an unrestrained manner. *Let's bring the kids to the playground so they can let off steam.* |
| **let sleeping dogs lie** | If you tell someone to let sleeping dogs lie, you are asking them not to interfere with a situation because they could cause problems. *Look, they've settled their differences.  It's time to let sleeping dogs lie.* |
| **let something ride** | When you decide to do nothing about a particular situation and allow it to remain as it is, you let it ride. *Bill didn't like the way his wife spoke to the operator, but he let it ride because he didn't want another quarrel.* |
| **lick into shape** | If you make an effort to put someone or something into satisfactory condition or appearance, you lick them into shape. *I've got to lick this place into shape before my in-laws arrive.* |
| **look down your nose** | If someone looks down their nose at a person or thing, they consider that person or thing as inferior. *Intellectuals often look down their noses at amusement parks and such.* |
| **make an ass of yourself** | If you behave so stupidly that you appear ridiculous, you make an ass of yourself.  *Tom made an ass of himself by singing a love song outside Laura's door!* |
| **make the best of things** | If you make the best of things, you react in a positive way to an unsatisfactory situation that you cannot change and do the best you can with it. *The apartment was badly located, but the rent was low, so they decided to make the best of things.* |
| **make an exhibition of yourself** | When someone behaves in such a foolish way in public that they look ridiculous, they make an exhibition of themselves. *Get down off the table Fred!  You're making an exhibition of yourself!* |
| **make light of** | If you make light of something, you behave as though it is less serious than it really is. *He won several awards for his work but he made light  of it when the subject was mentioned.* |
| **make light work of** | If a person makes light work of something, they do it very easily or with little effort. *The boys made light work of the cleaning up.  The house was spotless in no time.* |
| **make mincemeat of** | If you make mincemeat of someone or something, you completely and utterly defeat or destroy them. *A good lawyer would make mincemeat of your rival's accusations.* |
| **make a mountain out of a molehill** | If someone makes a mountain out of a molehill, they make a small, unimportant problem seem much more serious than it is. *Stop making mountains out of molehills!  It's not a major problem.* |
| **make no bones about** | If you make no bones about something, you don't hesitate to say what you think in a frank and open way. *I made no bones about it.  I told him his offer was unacceptable.* |
| **make nothing of** | If you make nothing of something, you attach no importance to it. *I took him an hour to walk to the station but he made nothing of it.* |
| **make short work of** | If you make short work of something, you do it or finish it quickly. *The players were hungry after the match so they made short work of the food.* |
| **make someone see reason** | If you make someone see reason, you persuade them to stop acting foolishly and behave more sensibly. *He wanted to drop out of medical school in his fourth year but his uncle managed to make him see reason.* |
| **make up for lost time** | If you make up for lost time, you increase your efforts or work harder to complete something or meet a deadline. *Progress has stopped because of bad weather, but we are determined to make up for lost time.* |
| **mind one's Ps and Qs** | If you tell someone to mind their Ps and Qs, you are advising them to be careful about how they behave and what they say. *Politeness is very important to my grandparents, so mind your Ps and Qs.* |
| **one good turn deserves another** | This expression means that when somebody helps you, you should do something helpful in return. |
| **out of character** | If you do something that is out of character, it is unlike your usual behaviour or not what is expected from you. *The way she panicked was out of character for such a normally calm person.* |
| **same old story** | This expression refers to an unpleasant situation that frequently occurs in the same way as before. *"Why am I annoyed with my brother ? It’s the same old story: he borrows money from me and « forgets » to pay me back!"* |

*English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions*

***Travel - Transport***

(Idioms page 1 :  jump on bandwagon  →  itchy feet)

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| **jump on the bandwagon** | If a person or organisation*jumps on the bandwagon*, they decide to do something when it is already successful or fashionable. *When organic food became popular, certain stores were quick to jump on the bandwagon and promote it.* | |
| **in the same boat** | If two or more parties are*in the same boat*, they are in the same unpleasant or difficult situation. *When the factory closed down, the workers all found themselves in the same boat.* | |
| **miss the boat** | If you *miss the boat*, you fail to take advantage of an opportunity because you don't act quickly enough. *I managed to get my order through before the end of the special offer - but I nearly missed the boat!* | |
| **(not) rock the boat** | If you tell someone *not to rock the boat*, you are asking them to do nothing that might cause trouble or upset a stable situation. *After the recent riots, it was decided not to rock the boat by introducing strict measures.* | |
| **paddle one's own canoe** | If you *paddle your own canoe,* you do what you want to do without help or interference from anyone. *He decided to paddle his own canoe and set up his own business.* | |
| **cart before the horse** | A person who*puts the cart before the horse* is doing things in the wrong order. *Building a school before knowing the age of the population is putting the cart before the horse.* | |
| **drive a hard bargain** | A person who*drives a hard bargain* always makes sure they gain advantage in a business deal. *Be prepared for tough negotiations with Dan. He drives a hard  bargain.* | |
| **drive up the wall** | If somebody or something *drives you up the wall,* they do something that greatly annoys or irritates you. *I can't concentrate with all the noise - it's driving me up the wall.* | |
| **backseat *driver*** | A passenger in a car who gives unwanted advice to the driver is called a *backseat driver. I can't stand backseat drivers like my mother-in-law!* | |
| **highways and byways** | If you travel*the highways and byways,* you take large and small roads to visit every part of the country. *He travelled the highways and byways looking for traces of his ancestors.* | |
| **my way or the *highway*** | It you say to someone*'it's my way or the highway'*, you are telling that person that either they accept what you propose or they leave the project. *You don't have much choice when someone says 'it's my way or the highway'.* | |
| **hit the road** | When you*hit the road*, you begin a journey. *It's getting late and we've got a long way to go.  Let's hit the road.* | |
| **on the home stretch** | To say that you are*on the home stretch* means that you are approaching the end of something such as a task, a race or a journey. *Don't give up - we're on the home stretch now.* | |
| **itchy feet** | A person who has*itchy feet* is someone who finds it difficult to stay in one place and likes to travel and discover new places. *Andrew's got itchy feet again.  He says he's going to teach in China for a few years.* | |
| **jump the lights** | If you continue driving when the traffic lights turn red, you jump the lights. *It's very dangerous to jump the lights.  No wonder he was stopped by the police.* |
| **fall off the back of a lorry** | Goods that have fallen off the back of a lorry are stolen goods. *Judging by the price of that camera, it must have fallen off the back of a lorry!* |
| **make your way to** | If you make your way to a destination, you manage to get there without difficulty. *Don't worry. I'll make my way to your home from the station.* |
| **pedal to the metal** | When you put the pedal to the metal, you accelerate or make something go faster. *If I put the pedal to the metal I might get there on time.* |
| **any port in a storm** | When you are in difficulty, any port in a storm refers to a solution you accept which in normal circumstances you would find unacceptable. *The hotel was substandard, but it was a case of any port in a storm;  all the others were full.* |
| **take for a ride** | To take someone for a ride means to cheat or deceive them. *I discovered he had charged me double the normal fee.  He really took me for a ride!* |
| **road rage** | Aggressive driving habits sometimes resulting in violence against other drivers is called road rage. *A number of accidents today are a direct result of road rage.* |
| **middle of the road (MOR)** | This term refers to anything moderate, unadventurous or inoffensive that avoids extremes and appeals to the majority of people. *He's a successful middle-of-the-road entertainer. My mother wouldn't miss a show!* |
| **get show on the road** | If you manage to put a plan into action, you get the show on the road. *OK, we've got all we need, so let's get the show on the road.* |
| **sail close to the wind** | If you sail close to the wind, you do something dangerous or act just within the limits of what is legal or acceptable. *He seems to invest his money well although he often sails close to the wind.* |
| **sail through** | If you sail through something, for example a test or an exam, you succeed in doing it without difficulty. *The English test was no problem for Pedro. He sailed through it.* |
| **shank's pony** | If you go somewhere on Shank's pony, you have to walk rather than travel by bus, car, etc. *It was impossible to find a taxi after the party, so it was Shank's pony for us!* |
| **ships that pass in the night** | This expression refers to people who meet briefly and are not likely to meet again. *The two men met one, like ships that pass in the night, and never met again.* |
| **live out of a suitcase** | Someone who lives of a suitcase travels a lot, moving from place to place, and is therefore restricted to the contents of their suitcase. *Sarah's job involves so much travelling that she lives out of a suitcase.* |
| **train of thought** | A sequence of connected ideas is called a train of thought. *I was considering the different options when the noise outside broke my train of thought.* |
| **hitch wagon to a star** | Someone who hitches their wagon to a star has great ambitions and is very determined to reach their goal. *At an early age she decided to hitch her wagon to a star and become famous.* |
| **on the wagon** | Someone who is on the wagon is no longer drinking alcohol. *No wine for me please - I'm on the wagon.* |
| **asleep at the wheel** | If you say that someone is asleep at the wheel, you mean that they are not sufficiently attentive, especially at a critical moment when vigilance is required. *When the firemen arrived too late at the scene, the night watchman was accused of being asleep at the wheel.* |
| **fifth wheel** | This expression refers to a person who find themselves in a situation where their presence is unnecessary and as a result they feel useless. *Everyone seemed to have a specific role except me. I felt like a fifth wheel* |
| **wheels fall off** | When a situation gets out of control and everything starts to go wrong, the wheels fall off.  *The wheels fell off her career when she started taking drugs and cancelling concerts*. |

*English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions*

***Violence***

(Idioms :   bandit territory   →  in/through the wars)

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| **bandit territory** | A geographical area where law enforcement is practically impossible, because people ignore all rules, is called '*bandit territory*'. *There are a certain number of bandit territories in the world where travellers are advised not to go.* |
| **beat black and blue** | If a person is covered with bruise marks caused by being hit, they have been *beaten black and blue. The passenger was beaten black and blue by a gang of thugs.* |
| **beat/knock the (living) daylights** | If a person *beats the (living) daylights* out of another, they hit them very hard and repeatedly. *If I catch you stealing again I'll beat the daylights out of you!* |
| **come to blows** | If two or more people *come to blows*, they start to fight. *The debate was so intense that the participants almost came to blows.* |
| **fight like cat and dog** | Two people who fight or argue*like cat and dog* frequently have violent arguments, even though they are fond of each other. *They fight like cat and dog but they're still together after 30 years.* |
| **fight tooth and nail** | If you*fight tooth and nail*for something, you fight with energy and determination. *The Transport Minister fought tooth and nail to have the proposed road safety law accepted.* |
| **fight an uphill battle** | A person faced with*an uphill battle*has to struggle against very unfavourable circumstances. *After the terrible accident, his recovery was an uphill battle all the way.* |
| **free-for-all** | This term refers to an uncontrolled situation such as an argument or fight where everyone present can do what they like. *It started as a serious debate but turned into a free-for-all.* |
| **gloves are off!** | This expression is used when there are signs that a fight is about to start. *The two candidates are out of their seats.  The gloves are off!* |
| **head on a platter** | If someone makes you so angry that you want them to be punished, you want their*head on a platter.* *He was so angry when he read the article about his family that he wanted the journalist's head on a platter.* |
| **road rage** | Aggressive driving habits sometimes resulting in violence against other drivers is called *road rage. A number of accidents today are a direct result of road rage.* |
| **take cover** | When someone*takes cover,*they hide from a danger in a place where they find protection. *As soon as the explosion was heard, people ran to take cover.* |
| **tit for tat** | This expression refers to an injury or insult given in return for one received. *"He kicked me, so I kicked him - it was tit for tat!" said the boy.* |
| **up in arms** | If you are *up in arms about something, you are very angry. The population was up in arms over the demolition of the old theatre.* |
| **in/through the *wars*** | If a person or thing has been*in (or through) the wars,* they show signs of rough treatment, injury or damage. *He arrived in a car that looked as if it had been in the wars.* |

*English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions*

***Weather - Atmosphere***

(Idioms page 1 :  bolt from the blue →  take a rain check)

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| **bolt from the *blue*** | To refer to something as a*bolt from the blue* means that it happened totally unexpectedly. *The chairman's resignation came as a bolt from the blue.* | |
| **on cloud nine** | A person who is *on cloud nine* is very happy because something wonderful has happened. *When the boss announced my promotion, I was on cloud nine.* | |
| **cloud on the horizon** | A problem or difficulty that is predictable, or seems likely to arise in the future, is called a*cloud on the horizon.* *They are happily married and for the moment there appear to be no clouds on the horizon.* | |
| **in the dark** | If someone is kept or left*in the dark* about something, they are not informed about it. *The personnel was kept in the dark about the merger until the last minute.* | |
| **fair-weather friend** | Someone who acts as a friend when times are good, and is not there when you are in trouble, is called a*fair-weather friend. I thought I could count on Bill, but I've discovered he's just a fair-weather friend.* | |
| **heavens open** | When the*heavens open*, it suddenly starts to rain heavily. *As soon as the race started, the heavens opened and the runners were soaked.* | |
| **once in a blue *moon*** | If something occurs *once in a blue moon*, it happens very rarely. *Bill has very little contact with his brother. They see each other once in a blue moon.* | |
| **reach for the *moon*** | If you *reach for the moon*, you are very ambitious and try to achieve something even if it is difficult. *His parents were hardworking people who encouraged their children to reach for the moon.* | |
| **come *rain* or shine** | If a person does something*come rain or shine*, they do it regularly, whatever the circumstances. *He goes to the gym club every day, come rain or shine.* | |
| **never *rains*but it pours** | This expression is used to comment on the fact that when something bad happens, other bad things often happen too, and make the situation even worse. *First he forgot his briefcase, then he lost his wallet, and when he reached the car park, his car had been stolen - it never rains but it pours!* | |
| **take a *rain* check** | To say that you *take a rain check*means that you cannot accept an invitation or offer now, but you will be happy to accept it later. *Do you mind if I take a rain check on that lunch invitation? I'm going to be away all week.* | |
| **chasing *rainbows*** | | Someone who is *chasing rainbows* is trying to get something they will never obtain. *She's trying to get into Oxford, but I think she's chasing rainbows.* |
| **raindrop in the drought** | | When someone is *waiting for a raindrop in the drought,*they are waiting and hoping for something that has little chance of happening. *For many people, finding a job these days is like waiting for a raindrop in the drought.* |
| **raining cats and dogs** | | If it's*raining cats and dogs*, it is raining very heavily. *We'll have to cancel the picnic I'm afraid - it's raining cats and dogs*. |
| **storm is brewing** | | If you say that *a storm is brewing*, you mean that the atmosphere indicates that there is going to be trouble, probably with outbursts of anger or emotion. *As soon as we saw Pete's face, we knew there was a storm brewing.* |
| **storm in a teacup** | | To refer to something as*a storm in a teacup* means that people are making a lot of unnecessary fuss or getting excited about something unimportant. *They were arguing about who should go to the supermarket, but it was just a storm in a teacup.* |
| **in the eye of the *storm*** | | A person or organisation who is*in the eye of the storm* is deeply involved in a difficult situation which affects a lot of people. *The Prime Minister was often in the eye of the storm during the debate on the war in Iraq.* |
| **lull before the *storm*** | | A period of unnatural calm before a difficult time or violent activity is called the*lull before the storm.*  *The sales start on January 1st. The quiet period before that is just the lull before the storm.* |
| **weather the *storm*** | | If you *weather the storm*, you succeed in surviving a difficult period or situation. *Given the current recession, the company is weathering the storm better than most.* |
| **stormy relationship** | | If you have *a stormy relationship* with someone, you have a lot of arguments and disagreements. *After a very stormy relationship, they decided to separate.* |
| **make hay while *sun*shines** | | This expression is used as an encouragement to take advantage of a good situation which may not last. *Successful athletes are advised to make hay while the sun shines*. |
| **snowed under** | | Someone who is*snowed under* has so many things to do, usually work, that they unable to cope with it all. *With the 'flu epidemic, doctors and nurses are completely snowed under.* |
| **face like *thunder*** | | If someone has a*face like thunder*, they look very angry. *When Dad is really angry, he has a face like thunder!* |
| **tide has turned** | | When a trend has changed from one thing to another, *the tide has turned.* *Before, people wanted to live in residential suburbs; now the tide has turned and warehouses are being converted into fashionable loft apartments.* |
| **under the *weather*** | | If you are*under the weather,*you are not feeling very well. *You look a bit under the weather.  What's the matter?* |
| **chill *wind* of something** | | If you face or feel the *chill wind* of something, you are beginning to encounter the problems or trouble it causes. M*any building companies are facing the chill wind of the recession.* |
| **get *wind*of** | | If you get wind of something, you hear about something you were unaware of, usually a private or secret matter. *The chairman didn't want the press to get wind of the takeover before the agreement was signed.* |
| **know which way *wind*blows** | | This expression means that it is advisable to know how a situation is developing, or what the tendency is, in order to be prepared for any changes.  *Before we decide on anything, we need to know which way the wind is blowing.* |

*English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions*

***Time***

(Idioms page 1 :  against the clock  →  in the long run)

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| **against the clock** | If you do something *against the clock,* you are rushed and have very little time to do it. *They are working against the clock to have the presentation ready for Monday.* | |
| **on the cusp** | *On the cusp* refers to a point in time that marks a transition or the beginning of a change. *Some people think the world is on the cusp of a new era.* | |
| **all along** | If something has existed or been somewhere *all along*, it has been there all the time, from the beginning. *I had been looking for my keys for some time before I realized they had been in my pocket all along.* | |
| **better late than never** | When someone does something late, this remark means that it is better to do it late than not do it at all. *Do you know what time it is? You promised you'd come early to help me - but better late than never I suppose!* | |
| **in the blink of an eye** | If something happens*in the blink of an eye*, it happens nearly instantaneously, with hardly enough time to notice it. *The pickpocket disappeared in the blink of an eye.* | |
| **by degrees** | If something happens or develops *by degrees*, it happens gradually or little by little as time goes by. *By degrees their business relationship grew into friendship.* | |
| **clock in/out** | When you*clock in*or *out*, you record the time you arrive or leave your job by punching a time clock to the show the  number of hours you have worked. *I'm going to clock out early today.  I've got a dental appointment*. | |
| **cut it/things fine** | If you *cut it/cut things fine*, you leave barely enough time to do something. *You're counting just an hour between the airport and the train station -  isn't that cutting things a bit fine?* | |
| **date late and a dollar short** | If something is *a day late and a dollar short*, it comes too late and is not good enough. *They offered me an internship when I had already found a job - a day late and a dollar short!* | |
| **donkey's years** | If someone has been doing something for *donkey's years*, they have been doing it for a very long time. *He knows the town inside out.  He's been living here for donkey's  years.* | |
| **down to the wire** | If something such as project or a match goes*down to the wire*, the situation can change up until the last possible moment. *There's nothing as exciting as watching a game that goes down to the wire.* | |
| **at the eleventh hour** | If something happens *at the eleventh hour*, it happens when it is almost too late, or at the last possible moment. *Our team won after they scored a goal at the eleventh hour.* | |
| **five o'clock shadow** | This expression refers to a patch of stubble on the face of a man who hasn't shaved for at least a day. *He looked tired and had a five o'clock shadow.* | |
| **in the interim** | Something that happens*in the interim* takes place during a period of time between two events. *I won't have the apartment until next month. In the interim I'm staying at a local hotel.* | |
| **in the long run** | This term refers to something that will have effect over or after a long period of time. *Learning Chinese is going to be difficult, but it'll be worth it in the long run because it will help me to get a better job.* | |
| **in one's own sweet time** | If you do something in your own sweet time, you take as long as you please to do it, in spite of the wishes of others. *OK, I'll do it - but in my own sweet time!* |
| **just around the corner** | If something is just around the corner, it will happen very soon. *With spring just around the corner, the new collection should begin to sell.* |
| **moment of truth** | A critical or decisive time when you face the reality of a situation, and find out if your efforts have succeeded, is called the moment of truth. *The moment of truth has arrived - I'm going to serve my first soufflé!* |
| **month of Sundays** | This expression is an amusing way of referring to a very long period of time. *I haven't been to the theatre in a month of Sundays.* |
| **never in a million years** | This expression means 'absolutely never' or 'at no time in my life'. *I will never in a million years understand why Anne married Bob.* |
| **once in a blue moon** | If something occurs once in a blue moon, it happens very rarely. *Bill has very little contact with his brother. They see each other once in a blue moon.* |
| **time after time** | If you do something time after time, you do it repeatedly or on many occasions. *The was surprised when the teacher punished him although he had been warned time after time.* |
| **time flies** | This expression is used to express surprise at how fast time passes (usually in a very active or happy situation). *It's hard to believe we've been living here two years already.  Time flies!* |
| **time on your hands** | If you have time on your hands, you have a lot of free time, usually more than you need or want. *Since he retired, Bill has too much time on his hands.  He should take up a hobby.* |
| **time of your life** | If you have the time of our life, you enjoy yourself very much. *The kids had the time of their lives at Disneyland.* |
| **time on your side** | If you have time on your side, you can afford to wait before doing or achieving something. *He didn't succeed this time, but he's young enough to try again. He's got time on his side.* |
| **time is ripe** | If the time is ripe for something, it is the right moment to do it. *He sold his business when the time was ripe.* |
| **time is ticking away** | The expression 'time is ticking away' can be used when you see the minutes or seconds going by as the clock ticks, especially when you are waiting anxiously for something to happen. *We need to intervene before it's too late.  Time's ticking away.* |
| **time-honoured practice** | A custom that is universally respected, or a traditional way of doing something, is called a time-honoured practice. *Guests were greeted according to a time-honored practice.* |
| **for the time being** | If you talk about how a situation is for the time being, you mean that it is temporary and will probably change in the future. *Laura has left John and is living with her parents for the time being.* |
| **living on borrowed time** | This expression refers to a period of time after an illness or accident which could have caused death. *After heart surgery, many patients feel that they're living on borrowed time.* |
| **lose track of time** | When you give all your attention to something and become so engrossed in it that you don't realize what time it is, you lose track of time. *Whenever I start surfing on the web, I lose track of time.* |
| **make up for lost time** | If you make up for lost time, you increase your efforts or work harder to complete something or meet a deadline. *Progress has stopped because of bad weather, but we are determined to make up for lost time.* |
| **matter of time** | If you say that it is only or just a matter of time before (or until) something happens, it is certain to happen or will inevitably take place, although you do not know when. *Restrictive measures will have to be introduced.  It's just a matter of time.* |
| **nick of time** | If something happens in the nick of time, it happens at the last minute, when it is nearly too late. *The child was standing in front of the open window.  His mother caught him in the nick of time.* |
| **play for time** | If you play for time, you try to delay or prevent something from happening in order to gain an advantage. *He decided to play for time in the hope that the price would decrease.* |
| **pressed for time** | If you are pressed for time, you have hardly enough time to do something, so you must hurry. *Sorry, I can't talk to you now.  I'm a bit pressed for time.* |
| **since time immemorial** | If something has existed since time immemorial, it has been there for such a long time that nobody can recall a time without it. *I don't know when that bridge was built.  It's been there since time immemorial.* |
| **stand the test of time** | If something stands the test of time, people continue to find it valuable or useful after many years. *The teaching method has stood the test of time.  It is still used in schools today.* |
| **stuck in a time warp** | Something that has not changed at all from some time in the past, when everything else has, is caught or stuck in a time warp. *This place seem to be stuck in a time warp.  It's exactly as it was in the 1950's.* |
| **race against time** | When someone is in a race against time, they have to work very quickly in order to do or finish something before a certain time. *It was a race against time to get everything ready for the inauguration.* |
| **shelf life** | If something such as food, drink or medicine has a particular shelf life, it must be used or sold before the end of that period of time. *Dairy products has quite a short shelf life.* |
| **ship has sailed** | The expression 'that ship has sailed' means that a particular opportunity has passed by and now it's too late. '*Is the offer still open?'  'Sorry, that ship has sailed - you missed your chance!'* |
| **sign of the times** | This expression refers to something that shows the nature of today's society. *The rising level of violence is a sign of the times.* |
| **small hours** | The term 'the small hours' means after midnight or the very early hours of the day. *Sarah worked until the small hours on her speech for the ceremony.* |
| **until hell freezes over** | If you tell someone that they can do something until hell freezes over, you mean that they can do it for a very long time but they won't obtain what they want. *You can ask until hell freezes over; I will not allow you to go bungee-jumping!* |

*English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions*

***Thoughts - Ideas - Imagination***

(Idioms page 1 :  against better judgement  →  mind over matter)

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| **against one's better judgement** | If you do something, even though you think it is not a sensible thing to do, you do it *against your better judgement*. *Bob persuaded her to go by car, against her better judgement, and she regretted it as soon as she saw the heavy traffic.* | |
| **by no stretch of the imagination** | The expression *'by no stretch of the imagination'* means 'however hard you may try to believe or imagine it'. *By no stretch of the imagination could he be called handsome.* | |
| **bee in one's bonnet** | Someone who has a *bee in their bonnet* has an idea which constantly occupies their thoughts. *She's got a bee in her bonnet about moving to New York.* | |
| **cloud cuckoo land** | This expression refers to an imaginary unrealistic place where everything is perfect and impossible things can happen. *Anyone who thinks these measures are going to solve the crisis is living in cloud-cuckoo-land!* | |
| **figment of one's imagination** | A*figment of one's imagination* is an appearance, event or incident that is not considered to be real but only imaginary. *Other people saw the car, so it's not a figment of my imagination!* | |
| **flight of fancy** | To refer to an idea or plan as a*flight of fancy*means that it is very imaginative but not at all practical or sensible. *He often has good ideas  but his latest proposal is just a flight of fancy!* | |
| **harebrained idea** | A *harebrained idea* is an idea or suggestion that is considered to be silly, foolish or totally impractical. *We'll never make any progress if you have nothing but harebrained ideas to offer!* | |
| **all in your head** | If something is *all in your head*, it is not real.  It is in your imagination. *Don't be silly.  Nobody is trying to harm you.  It's all in your head!* | |
| **toy with the*idea*** | If you consider something without giving it serious thought, you*toy with the idea.* *Sally has often toyed with the idea of moving abroad, but she's still here!* | |
| **light bulb moment** | A*light bulb moment* is when you have a sudden moment of inspiration, comprehension or realization. *Harry had a light-bulb moment when he finally realized what was blocking the mechanism.* | |
| **lose train of thought** | If you forget what you were saying, for example after a disturbance or interruption, you *lose your train of thought.* *Now where was I? I'm afraid I've lost my train of thought.* | |
| **back of your mind** | Something at the *back of your mind* is something that you are not thinking about right now but is in your thoughts. *At the back of my mind is the fear of failing the exam.* | |
| **bear/keep in mind** | If you*bear or keep something in mind*, you remember it. *Bear in mind that no food will be served on board.* | |
| **bring to mind** | If a place, person or object *brings* (something) *to mind*, it causes you to think of someone or something, or it evokes a memory. *This place brings to mind the small town where I grew up.* | |
| **broadens the mind** | Something that *broadens the mind* helps you understand more about different subjects, people, ideas and places. *It is often said that travel broadens the mind.* | |
| **change your mind** | If you *change your mind*you change your decision. *I was going to go sailing but I changed my mind when I saw the weather.* | |
| **cross your mind** | If an idea or thought*crosses your mind,* you suddenly think of it. *It has just crossed my mind that the shops are closed today.* | |
| **mind over matter** | The mental power to influence one's body and overcome physical difficulties is said to be a question of *mind over matter*. *He know he could not be cured, but he managed to live until the baby was born - a case of mind over matter.* | |
| **mind of your own** | If you have a mind of your own, you are capable of forming an opinion and making decisions without being influenced by others. *The boy doesn't need any advice; he's got a mind of his own.* |
| **my mind went blank** | If your mind goes blank, you forget everything momentarily or you are unable to think clearly. *I was so nervous during the test that my mind went blank!* |
| **one-track mind** | If you have a one-track mind, you have a tendency to think about only one subject. *The boy has a one-track mind; all he thinks about is football!* |
| **take your mind off** | If an activity takes your mind off something that is worrying you, it helps you to stop thinking about it for a while. *Sarah was worrying about the result of the test so Tom took her to the cinema to take her mind off it.* |
| **set great store by** | When you think that something is very important or valuable, you set great store by it. *The company sets great store by its after-sales service.* |
| **think again** | If you tell someone to think again, you advise them to reconsider the situation and perhaps change their decision. *Your apartment is well located; you should think again before selling it.* |
| **think better of it** | If you think better of something, you decide not to do something that you intended to do. *I wanted to go shopping, but when I saw the crowded car park I thought better of it.* |
| **think on your feet** | A person who thinks on their feet is capable of adjusting rapidly to new developments and making quick decisions,  *Good lawyers need to be able to think on their feet when pleading a case.* |
| **think outside the box** | People who think outside the box try to find innovative ideas or solutions. *Our competitors are more creative than us - they really think outside the box!* |
| **think the sun rises and sets on someone** | If you consider someone to be the most wonderful person in the world, you think the sun rises and sets on them. *She adores her husband - she thinks the sun rises and sets on him!* |
| **think the world of** | If you think the world of someone, you like or admire them very much. *She's a wonderful grandmother - the children think the world of her.* |
| **penny for your thoughts** | This phrase is used to ask someone what they are thinking about. *You look pensive.  A penny for your thoughts.* |
| **perish the thought** | This expression is used when the speaker really hopes that something will not happen. *If I lost my job, perish the thought, I don't know how we'd survive.* |
| **shot in the dark** | To refer to a question or statement as a shot in the dark means that it is a complete guess, but at the same time it might be close to the truth. *He didn't know which players had been selected, so mentioning Carter's name was just a shot in the dark..* |
| **train of thought** | A sequence of connected ideas is called a train of thought. *I was considering the different options when the noise outside broke my train of thought.* |
| **out of sight, out of mind** | This term means to forget someone you don't see frequently. *As soon as Jimmy retired he was forgotten by his colleagues. Out of sight, out of mind!* |
| **voice in the wilderness** | If you are the only person to express a warning or an opinion on a matter which is ignored by most others, you are a voice in the wilderness. *For many years she was a voice in the wilderness protesting against child labour.* |
| **wool-gathering** | A person who is wool-gathering is daydreaming and not concentrating on what his happening;  their thoughts are elsewhere. *Justin spent the whole afternoon wool-gathering.  He must be in love*! |
| **in a  world of your own** | If you are in a world of your own, you are so concentrated on your own concerns that you are unaware of what is happening around you. *Dad's out there in the garden in a world of how own.* |

*English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions*

***Surprise - Astonishment - Disbelief***

(Idioms :  bolt from the blue  →  seeing is believing)

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| **bolt from the blue** | To refer to something as a*bolt from the blue* means that it happened totally unexpectedly and was a complete surprise. *The chairman's resignation came as a bolt from the blue.* |
| **out of the blue** | If something happens*out of the blue,* it happens unexpectedly and causes a surprise. *I had nearly given up hope when out of the blue I was offered a job*. |
| **caught unawares** | If someone is *caught unawares*, they are surprised and unprepared for what happens. *The security guard moved so silently that the thief was caught unawares.* |
| **credibility gap** | The extent of disbelief, of the difference between what you are asked to believe and what you are able to believe, is called a *credibility gap* *The growing credibility gap may lead to a serious loss of votes in the next elections.* |
| **do a double take** | Someone who *does a double tak*e looks again in surprise at something unexpected. *He did a double take when he saw his wife in a restaurant with another man.* |
| **drop a bombshell** | If you *drop a bombshell,* you make an unexpected announcement which will greatly change a situation. *The chairman dropped a bombshell when he announced the merger with the company's biggest rival.* |
| **eyes on stalks** | If your *eyes are on stalks* when you look at something, they are wide open with surprise or amazement. *The child's eyes were on stalks as he watched  the magician's performance.* |
| **jaw drops** | If someone's*jaw drops,* they show total amazement. *When the prize was announced, the winner's jaw dropped.* |
| **jump out of one's skin** | If you*jump out of your skin*, you are extremely surprised or shocked. *Jane nearly jumped out of her skin when the horse put its head through the kitchen window!* |
| **knock your socks off** | If something amazes you, or impresses you greatly, it*knocks your socks off.* *The magnitude of the project will knock the socks off everyone in the office.* |
| **knock down with feather** | To say '*you could have knocked me down with a feather'*emphasizes the fact that you were extremely surprised. *When I heard the name of the winner, you could have knocked me down with a feather!* |
| **lo and behold!** | This term is used to express surprise, especially at a sudden or unexpected appearance. *I was watering the flowers when, lo and behold, there was the watch I'd lost!* |
| **nine-day wonder** | An event which is *a nine-day wonder* causes interest, surprise or excitement for a short time, but it doesn't last. *His sudden departure was a nine-day wonder but he was soon forgotten.* |
| **raise eyebrows** | Someone who*raises their eyebrows* at something shows surprise or disapproval  by the expression on their face. *When the boss arrived in jeans, there were a lot of raised eyebrows* |
| **rooted to the spot** | If you are so shocked, surprised or scared that you are *rooted to the spot*, you reaction is so strong that you are unable to move. *Joe stood rooted to the spot as the plane landed on the water.* |
| **seeing is believing** | This expression means that when you see something that seems incredible you can be sure it exists, or that what you have been told is really true. *Mark says bananas grow in his garden, but seeing is believing!* |
| **stop dead in tracks** | If you *stop dead in your tracks,* you stop suddenly because you are totally surprised or frightened. *When Steve saw the snake, he stopped dead in his tracks.* |
| **struck dumb** | If someone is *struck dumb,* they are unable to speak because they are so surprised, shocked or frightened by something. *The accused was struck dumb when the verdict was announced*. |
| **taken unawares** | If something*takes you unawares,* it surprises you because you were not expecting it. *His angry reaction took me unawares.* |
| **there's no accounting for taste** | This expression is used to indicate surprise at another person's likes or dislikes. *She fell in love with a guy who's short, fat, bald and poor ... there's no accounting for taste!* |
| **wonders will never cease** | This saying is used to express pleasure or surprise at something. *The price of petrol has dropped!  Wonders will never cease!* |
| **words fail me** | This expression is often used when someone is so shocked, surprised or touched by something that they don't know what to say. *"What do you think of Bob's attitude?"  "Words fail me!"* |

*English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions*

***Success - Failure***

(Idioms page 1 :  ace a test  → had one's chips)

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| **ace a test** | If you obtain a very high score or an excellent result, you*ace a test or exam.* *Maria's parents said she could go to the party if she aced her English test.* | |
| **ace in the hole** | A poker term wihch means an advantage or resource kept hidden until needed. *Our candidate has an ace in the hole that will ensure victory ... you'll see!* | |
| **have an ace up your sleeve** | If you *have an ace up your sleeve*, you have something in reserve with which you can gain an advantage and obtain success. *I'm well prepared for the negotiations. I've got an ace up my sleeve*. | |
| **hold all the aces** | A person who *holds all the aces* is in a very strong position because they have more advantages than anyone else. *Given the high unemployment rates today, employers hold all the aces.* | |
| **also-ran** | This term refers to an unsuccessful competitor whose performance is so much poorer than the winner's that it appears insignificant. *He entered the contest hoping that he wouldn't end up as an 'also-ran'.* | |
| **back to square one** | To say that someone is *back to square one* means that they have not succeeded in what they were trying to do, so they have to start again. *When the plans were refused, it was 'back to square one' for the architect.* | |
| **in the bag** | People use this expression when it becomes obvious that success or victory is going to be achieved. *An hour before the polling stations closed, victory seemed in the bag for the Conservative candidate.* | |
| **bear fruit** | If something *bears fruit*, it produces positive or successful results. *After years of hard work, his research finally began to bear fruit.* | |
| **(up a) blind alley** | If you go up a *blind alley*, you follow an ineffective course of action which leads nowhere or produces no results. *The suspect's 'revelations' lead the police up a blind alley.* | |
| **blockbuster** | Something that is outstanding, impressive or particularly successful, such as a film or a book ,is called a *blockbuster*. *The TV series was a blockbuster.* | |
| **blow up in face** | When working on a plan or project, if it suddenly goes wrong or fails, it*blows up in your face.* *The trip was difficult to organise, but it blew up in his face when the airline company went on strike.* | |
| **bottom fell out** | When something causes a plan, project or venture to collapse or fail, the*bottom falls out* of it. *When heavy rain was announced, the bottom fell out of their plans for a beach party.* | |
| **bring the house down** | If you *bring the house down*, you give a very successful performance. *If he sings like that on Saturday, he'll bring the house down.* | |
| **cake not worth the candle** | To say that *the cake* *is not worth the candle* means that the advantages to be gained from doing something are not worth the effort involved. *He recorded an album but sold very few copies; the cake wasn't worth the candle.* | |
| **chance one's arm** | If you *chance your arm*, you decide to do something even though there is little hope of success. *Tony knew there was little hope of getting into Harvard but he decided to chance his arm anyway.* | |
| **had one's chips** | To say that someone *has had their chips* means that they have completely failed in what they set out to achieve. *After the second round, it looked as though Watson had had his chips.* | |
| **close but no cigar** | This expression refers to an effort to do something which was a good attempt but not quite good enough to succeed. *The ball touched the goal post - close but*no cigar! |
| **come to grief** | If someone or something comes to grief, they either have an accident, are destroyed or end in failure. *Their plans for a golf course came to grief when it was decided to build a motorway.* |
| **come up in the world** | A person who has come up in the world is richer than before and has a higher social status. *My old school friend has bought an apartment overlooking Central Park.  She has certainly come up in the world.* |
| **come up roses** | If things come up roses, the end result is successful or positive, even if there were difficult times. *After several disappointments, everything seems to be coming up roses for the tennis player this year.* |
| **come/turn up trumps** | To say that someone has come up trumps means that they have achieved unexpectedly good results. *Against all expectations, our team came up trumps in the cup final.* |
| **cook someone's goose** | To cook somebody's goose means to spoil that person's chances of success. *When the burglar saw the police car arriving, he realized his goose was cooked!* |
| **on course for** | If you are on course for something, you are likely to achieve it. *Our team is on course for a victory in the national championship.* |
| **crest of the wave** | If you are on the crest of a wave, you are very successful in what you are doing. *Our company is going from success to success.  We're on the crest of a wave right now.* |
| **cut one's losses** | If you end or withdraw from something that is already failing, in order to reduce the loss of money, time or effort invested in it,  you cut your losses. *The project is heading for failure.  Let's cut our losses before it's too late.* |
| **cut one's own throat** | If you cut your own throat, you do something that will be the cause of your own failure or ruin your chances in the future. *Tony has already missed a lot of classes.  He's cutting his own throat.* |
| **dead cert** | Something that is certain to happen or be achieved is a dead cert. *After such praise, his appointment as captain of the team is a dead cert.* |
| **dead duck** | This expression refers to a project or scheme which has been abandoned or is certain to fail. *The new cinema is going to be a dead duck because it's too far away from the town centre.* |
| **dead in the water** | A plan or project that is dead in the water is at a standstill or has ceased to function and is unlikely to be reactivated in the future. *Because of the crisis, the planned housing development is now dead in the water.* |
| **dice are loaded** | If everything seems to work to your disadvantage, and you are not likely to succeed, the dice are loaded against you. *I applied for the job, but being a woman, and over forty, the dice were loaded against me.* |
| **disaster written all over** | If something, such as a plan or idea, has disaster written all over it, it is thought to be heading for complete failure, or will cause a lot of trouble. *Mary's idea of a holiday with her in-laws has disaster written all over it!* |
| **all downhill downhill all the way** | If something is all downhill or downhill all the way, it is very easy to achieve considering the difficulties encountered beforehand. *The hardest part for the burglars was turning off the alarm system.  After that it was all downhill.* |
| **draw a blank** | If you look for or try to remember something, and draw a blank, you fail to find it. *I nearly won the quiz; unfortunately I drew a blank at the last question!* |
| **every dog has its day** | This expression means that everyone can be successful at something at some time in their life. *I didn't win this time, but I'll be lucky one day.  Every dog has its day.* |
| **fall at first hurdle** | If you fall at the first hurdle, you fail to overcome the first difficulty encountered. *Scott fell at the first hurdle.  He didn't study enough and failed his first  exam.* |
| **fall flat** | If a joke, a story or a form of entertainment falls flat, it does not amuse people, or fails to have the effect that was intended. *He made a few attempts at humour during his speech but most of his jokes fell flat.* |
| **fall from grace** | To say that someone has fallen from grace means that they have done something wrong, immoral or unacceptable, and as a result  have lost their good reputation. *The Finance Minister fell from grace as a result of a sex scandal.* |
| **fall on one's sword** | If you fall on your sword, you accept the consequences of an unsuccessful or wrong action. *The organiser of the referendum resigned when the poor results were announced.  It was said that he' fell on his sword'.* |
| **feather in one's cap** | To describe someone's achievement as a feather in their cap means that it is something they can be proud of. *The overwhelming victory of the team was a feather in the cap for the new manager.* |
| **fight a losing battle** | If someone is fighting a losing battle, they are trying to do something even when there is little chance of succeeding. *The headmaster is fighting a losing battle trying to ban mobile phones at school.* |
| **(reach) first base** | When you get to (or reach) first base, you make progress or begin to have success with someone or something. *If you go to the interview dressed like that, you won't get to first base!* |
| **flash in the pan** | If you refer to somebody's success as a flash in the pan, you mean that it is not likely to be repeated. *The manager hoped that the team's unexpected victory was not just a flash in the pan.* |
| **will never fly** | To say that something will never fly means that it will not be successful. *He's got incredible ideas, but none that will ever fly!* |
| **with flying colours** | To achieve something with flying colours means to do it very successfully. *My daughter passed the entrance exam with flying colours.  I'm so proud of her.* |
| **flying start** | If something gets off to a flying start, it is immediately successful. *Sales of the book got off to a flying start and exceeded our expectations.* |
| **fool's errand** | If you go on a fool's errand, you try to do something which is useless, unnecessary or has no chance of success. *I realized it was a fool's errand to look for a bank in such an isolated region.* |
| **foot in the door** | To say that someone has a foot in the door means that they have a small but successful start in something and will possibly do well in the future. *With today's unemployment, it is difficult to get a foot in the door in any profession.* |
| **get a foothold** | If you get a foothold somewhere, you secure a position for yourself in a business, profession or organisation. *The contract got the firm a foothold in the local administration.* |
| **front runner** | In a contest, race or election, the front runner is the person who is most likely to succeed or win. *Who are the front runners in the coming elections?* |
| **get the better of you** | If someone or something gets the better of you, they defeat you. *She went on a diet but it didn't last long - her love of chocolate got the better of her!* |
| **go to the dogs** | To say that a company, organisation or country is going to the dogsmeans that it is becoming less successful or efficient than before. *Some think the company will go to the dogs if it is nationalized.* |
| **go great guns** | If someone or something is going great guns, they are successful or doing very well. *Fred's night club is going great guns.  It's becoming hard to get in!* |
| **go (off/over) with a bang** | If something such as an event or performance goes off with a bang, it is very successful. *The party went off with a bang - everyone enjoyed it.* |
| **go up in smoke** | If a plan or project goes up in smoke, it fails or ends before producing a result. *When Amy and Tom separated, my mother's dream of a romantic wedding went up in smoke.* |
| **got it made** | Someone who has got it made is so happy and successful in life that they have no worries. *With a happy family life, a new house and a super job, Sam's got it made.* |
| **hit pay dirt** | If you hit pay dirt, you are lucky and suddenly find yourself in a successful money-making situation. *Charlie finally hit pay dirt with his latent invention.* |
| **on its knees** | When something such as a country or organisation is on its knees, or brought to its knees, it is in a very weak situation or on the verge of failure. *The civil war brought the country to its knees.* |
| **landslide victory** | The victory of a candidate or a political party by an overwhelming majority is called a landslide victory. *Major newspapers predict a landslide victory for the Democratic Party.* |
| **lead to a dead end** | If a plan or project leads to a dead end, it develops no further because it has no future. *In spite of the scientists' efforts, the research lead to a dead end.* |
| **leaps and bounds** | If you do something in leaps and bounds, you make rapid or spectacular progress or growth. *The number of subscribers to the newsletter has grown in leaps and bounds.* |
| **let slip through fingers** | If you let something slip through your fingers, such as a good opportunity, you fail to obtain it or keep it. *He should have accepted the job when it was offered. He let the opportunity slip through his fingers.* |
| **live to fight another day** | This expression means that even though you have not been successful, you will have another chance in the future to try again. *He was defeated in the final match but he lived to fight another day.* |
| **come a long way** | When someone has come a long way, they have made a lot of progress or have become successful. *Tony has come a long way since he opened his first little restaurant.* |
| **at a low ebb** | A person or organisation at a low ebb is not as strong or successful as usual. *The recent political crisis has left the country at a low ebb.* |
| **make a comeback** | When someone makes a comeback, they succeed in returning to their former successful career. *After devoting several years to her children, she made a comeback on Broadway.* |
| **make the cut** | If you make the cut, you reach a required standard or succeed in passing from one round of a competition to another. *After intensive training, Sarah made the cut and joined the team.* |
| **make a go of** | When you make a go of something, you succeed in your enterprise or produce good results. *He opened a restaurant and worked hard to make a go of it.* |
| **make headway** | If you make headway, you make progress in what you are trying to achieve. *Investigators have made little headway in their search for the causes of the catastrophe.* |
| **make inroads** | If someone or something makes inroads, for example in a new field or area, they advance successfully or make progress. *Foreign cars have made inroads into the European market.* |
| **make a killing** | If you say that someone has made a killing you mean that they have had great financial success. *He made a killing on the stock market.* |
| **make or break** | Circumstances or events that will make or break someone or something will cause either total success or total ruin. *The assignment will make or break his career.* |
| **make a pig's ear of** | If you make a  pig's ear of something, you do a task or a chore very badly or make a complete mess of it. *Gary offered to paint the kitchen but he made a pig's ear of it.* |
| **miss the boat** | If you miss the boat, you fail to take advantage of an opportunity because you don't act quickly enough. *I managed to get my order through before the end of the special offer - but I nearly missed the boat!* |
| **moment of truth** | A critical or decisive time when you face the reality of a situation, and find out if your efforts have succeeded, is called the moment of truth. *The moment of truth has arrived - I'm going to serve my first soufflé!* |
| **move up in the world** | A person who moves up in the world becomes more important in society or successful in their career. *Rachel Jones has moved up in the world since we were kids.* |
| **murphy's law** | Referring to Murphy's law expresses a sentiment of bad luck and the idea that if anything can go wrong, it will. *We've tried to prepare for every possible incident, but remember Murphy's law ...!* |
| **not getting anywhere** | If you are not getting anywhere, you are making no progress at all. *I've spent the whole day looking for a solution but I'm not getting anywhere.* |
| **nothing succeeds like success!** | This expression means that success often leads to further successes. *The success of my first book encouraged to continue writing.  Nothing succeeds like success!* |
| **nothing ventured, nothing gained** | You cannot expect to achieve anything is you risk nothing. *He's going to ask his boss for a promotion even though he has little chance of obtaining satisfaction.  Nothing ventured, nothing gained!* |
| **out of the picture** | To say that a person or group is out of the picture means that they have been eliminated in a contest or tournament. *We were beaten  in the semi-finals, so that's us out of the picture!* |
| **ahead of the pack** | If a person or organisation is ahead of the pack, they are better or more successful than their rivals. *Our products will have to be more innovative if we want to stay ahead of the pack.* |
| **pack something in** | If you pack something in, you abandon it or give it up. *She found city life so stressful, she decided to*pack it in*and move to the country.* |
| **pass muster** | If someone or something passes muster, they are considered to be satisfactory or acceptable. *The interview went well.  I hope I'll pass muster.* |
| **on the pig's back** | A person who is on the pig's back is in a successful situation and everything is going well for them. *Before the recession, Ireland was on the pig's back, but the situation has changed greatly.* |
| **place in the sun** | If you find a place in the sun, you reach a position which provides you with success, wealth and/or happiness, or whatever you have been hoping to obtain in life. *She finally found a place in the sun with the triumph of her latest book.* |
| **put the kibosh on** | If you do something to prevent a plan or activity from happening or being successful, you put the kibosh on it. *The bank's refusal to grant him a loan put the kibosh on Jack's project.* |
| **pyrrhic victory** | A victory that is obtained at a tremendous cost, or causes such a great loss that it is not worth winning, is called a Pyrrhic victory. *It was a Pyrrhic victory.  The shop owner won the lawsuit but went bankrupt because of the legal expenses involved.* |
| **rags to riches** | If a person goes from rags to riches, they start off being very poor and become very rich and successful. *By renovating old houses in the right places, he went from rags to riches.* |
| **riding high** | Someone who is riding high is enjoying a period of success or popularity. *He's been riding high since the success of his last film.* |
| **rise to the occasion** | If you rise to the occasion, you manage to do something successfully in difficult circumstances. *When her boss broke his leg, Julie had to represent the company at the congress, and she rose to the occasion extremely well*. |
| **run rings around** | If you show much more skill or ability than your opponent, you run rings (or circles) around them. *In a quiz show on TV yesterday, a teenage girl ran rings around the other contestants.* |
| **sail through** | If you sail through something, for example a test or an exam, you succeed in doing it without difficulty. *The English test was no problem for Pedro. He sailed through it.* |
| **save the day** | If you find a solution to a serious problem, and ensure the success of something that was expected to fail, you save the day. *The dog ate the apple pie I had made for my guests, but my sister saved the day by making one of her speedy desserts!* |
| **sink or swim** | If someone has to sink or swim, they have to do something alone, and their success or failure depends entirely on their own efforts. *The sink-or-swim attitude in the company can be very difficult for young recruits.* |
| **sky's the limit** | To say the sky's the limit means that there is no limit to the possibility of success or progress for someone or something. *"How successful do you think the project will be?" "Who knows ... the sky's the limit!"* |
| **slam dunk** | A basketball term which means that success or victory will be easily achieved. *"Our lawyer will win the case easily. It's a slam dunk."* |
| **smash hit** | A very successful performance in music, films, theatre, etc. is called a smash hit. *The film 'Titanic' was a smash hit all over the world.* |
| **snatch victory from the jaws of defeat** | If you manage to win something such as a match or a contest, when you are on the verge of losing, you snatch victory from the jaws of defeat. *With a last-minute goal, the team snatched victory form the jaws of defeat.* |
| **spread oneself too thin** | If you spread yourself too thin, you do too many things at the same time and can't do any of them well. *Don't spread yourself too thin or you'll get nowhere.* |
| **throw a spanner in the works** | If someone or something throws a spanner (or a wrench) in the works, they do something that causes problems and prevents the success of a plan or event. *The two companies were keen to sign the agreement before anything happened to throw a spanner in the works.* |
| **throw in the towel** | If you throw in the towel, you admit that you cannot succeed. *After unsuccessfully competing in several championships, she decided to throw in the towel and go back to college.* |
| **top dog** | To say that a person, group or country is top dog means that they are more successful or more powerful than others. *She's top dog in cosmetics today.* |
| **on the up and up** | If you are on the up and up, you are becoming increasingly successful. *The architect has been on the up and up since he designed a building in Dubai.* |
| **weather the storm** | If you weather the storm, you succeed in surviving a difficult period or situation. *Given the current recession, the company is weathering the storm better than most.* |
| **win-win** | The term win-win refers to a situation or proposition where both or all parties benefit from the outcome. *There were smiles all round when the contract was signed - it was a win-win situation.* |
| **wither on the vine** | If something withers on the vine, it fails or ceases to exist because people do not support or encourage it. *Let's hope the recent efforts towards peace will not wither on the vine.* |
| **wooden spoon** | The person who finishes last in a race or competition receives an imaginary prize called the wooden spoon. *Our team got the wooden spoon in this year's tournament.* |
| **have the world at your feet** | If you have the world at your feet, you are extremely successful and greatly admired. *The talented young actress has the world at her feet.* |
| **have the worldby its tail** | Someone who has the world by its tail is very successful and has many opportunities to choose from. *Due to her intelligence and hard work, she now has the world by its tail.* |

*English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions*

***Sports - Games - Athletics***

(Idioms page 1 :  ball is in your court  → give the game away)

|  |  |  |
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| **ball is in your court** | If the *ball is in your court*, it is your turn to speak or act next. *We gave the manager a list of complaints, so the ball is in his court now.* | |
| **have a ball** | If you *have a ball* you enjoy yourself immensely. *The party was great. We had a ball.* | |
| **on the ball** | If you are *on the ball*, you are aware of what is happening and are able to deal with things quickly and intelligently. *We need someone who is really on the ball to head the fund-raising campaign.* | |
| **start the ball rolling** | If you *start the ball rolling,* you begin an activity in which other people will join. *Let's start the ball rolling by calling on our first speaker.* | |
| **that's the way the ball bounces** | Things don't always work out as planned, and there's nothing we can do about it - that's life. *He didn't get the prize he expected, but never mind - that's the way the ball bounces.* | |
| **whole new ball game** | To refer to something as a *whole new ball game* means that it is a completely different situation due to a new set of circumstances. *Email and text messaging have made communication a whole new ball game.* | |
| **dive in headfirst** | If you begin something enthusiastically, without thinking about the possible consequences, you *dive in headfirst.* *Tony accepted the project without realizing the time it would take; he always dives in headfirst!* | |
| **fishing expedition** | If someone is on a*fishing expedition*, they are trying to obtain information in any way possible. *The lunch invitation was clearly  a fishing expedition to obtain information about his private life.* | |
| **fishing for compliments** | When someone is obviously waiting for you to say something nice, they are *fishing for compliments.* *I know why she invited us to her new house - she's just fishing for compliments.* | |
| **at this stage of the *game*** | This expression refers to the current point reached in a process, activity or developing situation. *At this stage of the game I think any further intervention would be unwise.  Let's wait and see how things develop.* | |
| **give the *game* away** | If you *give the game away*, you reveal a secret or a plan, often unintentionally. *He hoped nobody in the hotel would recognize him, but an employee gave the game away.* | |
| **play the game** | If you play the game, you accept to do things according to generally-accepted customs or code of behaviour. *Not all website owners play the game. Some download content from other sites without permission.* |
| **play games with someone** | If you are not completely honest, or behave in a way that is insincere, evasive or intentionally misleading, you are playing games with someone. *Look, stop playing games with us.  Just tell us if you're interested in the project or not.* |
| **two can play at that game** | You say this to tell someone that you can behave towards them in the same unpleasant way that they have behaved towards you. *He refuses to take my call?  Tell him two can play at that game!* |
| **a waiting game** | A person who plays a waiting game delays taking any action or making any decision because they prefer to wait and see how things develop, usually in the hope that this will put them in a stronger position. *Our competitors are not reacting. They're playing a waiting game.* |
| **hang up one's boots** | When a sports player hangs up their boots, they stop playing and retire. (This expression is often used to refer to retirement in general.) *Dad says he's going to hang up his boots at the end of the year.* |
| **learn the ropes** | If you learn the ropes, you learn how to do a particular job correctly. *He's bright.  It won't take him long to learn the ropes.* |
| **make the cut** | If you make the cut, you reach a required standard or succeed in passing from one round of a competition to another. *After intensive training, Sarah made the cut and joined the team.* |
| **paddle one's own canoe** | If you paddle your own canoe, you do what you want to do without help or interference from anyone. *He decided to paddle his own canoe and set up his own business.* |
| **race against time** | When someone is in a race against time, they have to work very quickly in order to do or finish something before a certain time. *It was a race against time to get everything ready for the inauguration.* |
| **ride coattails** | If you use your connections with someone successful in order to achieve fame or success for yourself, without any personal effort, you ride their coattails. *He rode his uncle's coattails in the hope of being elected.* |
| **ride roughshod over** | If you ride roughshod over something, you behave in a harsh or thoughtless manner, or you treat a situation with contempt. *The government rode roughshod over all opposition to the new measures.* |
| **ride it out ride out the storm** | If you manage to survive a dangerous or very unpleasant situation, like a ship sailing through a storm, you ride it out. *His business was hit by the recession but he managed to ride it out.* |
| **let something ride** | When you decide to do nothing about a particular situation and allow it to remain as it is, you let it ride. *Bill didn't like the way his wife spoke to the operator, but he let it ride to avoid another quarrel*. |
| **take for a ride** | To take someone for a ride means to cheat or deceive them. *I discovered he had charged me double the normal fee.  He really took me for a ride!* |
| **riding high** | Someone who is riding high is enjoying a period of success or popularity. *He's been riding high since the success of his last film.* |
| **sail close to the wind** | If you sail close to the wind, you do something dangerous or act just within the limits of what is legal or acceptable. *He seems to invest his money well although he often sails close to the wind.* |
| **sail through** | If you sail through something, for example a test or an exam, you succeed in doing it without difficulty. *The English test was no problem for Pedro. He sailed through it.* |
| **take wind out of sails** | If someone or something takes the wind out of your sails, they make you feel less confident by doing or saying something that you do not expect. *The manger's rejection of our marketing strategy really took the wind out of our sails.* |
| **skating on thin ice** | If you are skating on thin ice, you are doing or saying something risky, or something that could cause trouble. *Don't mention that subject during the negotiations or you could be skating on thin ice.* |
| **swim against the tide** | A person who is doing or saying the opposite to most other people is said to be swimming against the tide. *Perhaps it's because she always swims against the tide that her books are successful.* |

*English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions*

***Speed - Rapidity***

(Idioms page 1  :  drop of a hat →   leaps and bounds)

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| **at the drop of a hat** | If you do something *at the drop of a hat,* you do it quickly and immediately, without hesitation. *I've got great friends. They're ready to help out at the drop of a hat.* | | |
| **at one fell swoop** | If something is accomplished *at (*or*in) one fell swoop,* it is done in a single action, usually rapidly and ruthlessly. *The three houses were demolished at one fell swoop.* | | |
| **beat to the draw** | If you *beat someone to the draw*, you react more quickly and manage to do something before they do. *Ross was determined to be the first to arrive. He managed to beat the others to the draw.* | | |
| **before the ink is dry** | If people reach an agreement, and then change their minds immediately afterwards, the change occurs *'before the ink is dry'.* *You can never tell when he's serious.  He's capable of changing his mind before the ink is dry!* | | |
| **before you know it / before you know where you are** | If something takes place so rapidly that you don't have time to become aware of it, it happens*before you know it* or *before you know where you are. The doorbell rang, and before we knew it a surprise birthday party was under way!* | | |
| **fast and furious** | If an activity is*fast and furious*, it is done quickly and with a lot of energy. *Eager to win the race, the competitors came fast and furious around the bend.* | | |
| **fast talker** | A person who speaks quickly and easily but cannot always be trusted is called a*fast talker.* *The salesman was a fast talker who persuaded the old lady to buy a new washing machine.* | | |
| **get a move on** | If someone tells you to *get a move on,* they are asking you to hurry up. *You'd better get a move on or you'll miss the bus!* | | |
| **go hell for leather** | If you *go hell for leather*, you go somewhere or do something very fast. *I saw Tom going hell for leather towards the station.* | | |
| **in the blink of an eye** | If something happens*in the blink of an eye*, it happens so fast or instantaneously that you have hardly enough time to notice it. *The pickpocket disappeared in the blink of an eye.* | | |
| **in/by leaps and bounds** | If you do something*in leaps and bounds,* you make rapid or spectacular progress or growth. *The number of subscribers to the newsletter has grown in leaps and bounds.* | | |
| **in two shakes (of a lamb's tail)** | | To do something*in two shakes of a lamb's tail* means to do it very quickly. *Wait for me.  I'll be ready in two shakes (of a lamb's tail).* | |
| **like a bat out of hell** | | If something moves *like a bat out of hell,* it moves very quickly. *He grabbed the envelope and ran like a bat out of hell.* | |
| **like greased lightning** | | If something moves*like greased lightning,* it moves extremely fast. *As soon as the owner appeared, the boy ran like greased lightning.* | |
| **like a shot** | | If you do something*like a shot,* you do it very quickly, without any hesitation. *If I won a lot of money on the lotto, I'd leave my job like a shot!* | |
| **like wildfire** | | If something such as news, rumours or gossip spreads *like wildfire*, it becomes widely known very fast. *As soon as the nomination was announced, the news spread like wildfire.* | |
| **make it snappy** | | If someone tells you to *make it snappy,* they are asking you very sharply to hurry up  or be quick about something. *Fetch me a bandage and make it snappy!* | |
| **nineteen to the dozen** | | Someone who*talks nineteen to the dozen*speaks very quickly. *He was talking nineteen to the dozen so I didn't catch the whole story.* | |
| **put the pedal to the metal** | | When you *put the pedal to the metal,*you accelerate or make something go faster. *If we put the pedal to the metal we could get this finished in time.* | |
| **quick as a dog can lick a dish** | | If you do something surprisingly fast, you do it *as quick as a dog can lick a dish.* *He packed his bag as quick as a dog can lick a dish.* | |
| **race against time** | | When someone is in a race against time, they have to work very quickly in order to do or finish something before a certain time. *It was a race against time to get everything ready for the inauguration.* | |
| **snail's pace** | | If something moves*at a snail's pace*, it moves very slowly. *The old man was driving along the road at a snail's pace.* | |
| **snap decision** | | A quick decision based on an impulse, without taking time to weigh the consequences, is called*a snap decision.* *Completely overworked, he suddenly turned off his computer and made a snap decision to go swimming.* | |
| **step on the gas** | | If someone tells you to *step on the gas,* they are encouraging you to accelerate or hurry up in order to get something done quickly. *We'd better step on the gas and get these figures printed.  The meeting starts in half an hour.* | |
| **throw something together** | | If you*throw something together*, you make or produce something quickly and without effort. *Why don't you stay for dinner - I'll throw something together!* | |
| **in two shakes (of a lamb's tail)** | | | To do something in two shakes of a lamb's tail means to do it very quickly. *Wait for me.  I'll be ready in two shakes (of a lamb's tail).* |
| **like a bat out of hell** | | | If something moves like a bat out of hell, it moves very quickly. *He grabbed the envelope and ran like a bat out of hell.* |
| **like greased lightning** | | | If something moves like greased lightning, it moves extremely fast. *As soon as the owner appeared, the boy ran like greased lightning.* |
| **like a shot** | | | If you do something like a shot, you do it very quickly, without any hesitation. *If I won a lot of money on the lotto, I'd leave my job like a shot!* |
| **like wildfire** | | | If something such as news, rumours or gossip spreads like wildfire, it becomes widely known very fast. *As soon as the nomination was announced, the news spread like wildfire.* |
| **make it snappy** | | | If someone tells you to make it snappy, they are asking you very sharply to hurry up  or be quick about something. *Fetch me a bandage and make it snappy!* |
| **nineteen to the dozen** | | | Someone who talks nineteen to the dozen speaks very quickly. *He was talking nineteen to the dozen so I didn't catch the whole story.* |
| **put the pedal to the metal** | | | When you put the pedal to the metal, you accelerate or make something go faster. *If we put the pedal to the metal we could get this finished in time.* |
| **quick as a dog can lick a dish** | | | If you do something surprisingly fast, you do it as quick as a dog can lick a dish. *He packed his bag as quick as a dog can lick a dish.* |
| **race against time** | | | When someone is in a race against time, they have to work very quickly in order to do or finish something before a certain time. *It was a race against time to get everything ready for the inauguration.* |
| **snail's pace** | | | If something moves at a snail's pace, it moves very slowly. *The old man was driving along the road at a snail's pace.* |
| **snap decision** | | | A quick decision based on an impulse, without taking time to weigh the consequences, is called a snap decision. *Completely overworked, he suddenly turned off his computer and made a snap decision to go swimming.* |
| **step on the gas** | | | If someone tells you to step on the gas, they are encouraging you to accelerate or hurry up in order to get something done quickly. *We'd better step on the gas and get these figures printed.  The meeting starts in half an hour.* |
| **throw something together** | | | If you throw something together, you make or produce something quickly and without effort. *Why don't you stay for dinner - I'll throw something together!* |

*English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions*

***Sleep - Tiredness***

(Idioms :   asleep at wheel  →  sleeping partner)

|  |  |
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| **asleep at the wheel** | If you say that someone is *asleep at the wheel,* you mean that they are not sufficiently attentive, especially at a critical moment when vigilance is required. *When the firemen arrived too late at the scene, the night watchman was accused of being asleep at the wheel.* |
| **cat nap** | If you have a short sleep during the day, you have a*cat nap*. *My dad often has a cat nap on a Sunday afternoon.* |
| **forty winks** | If you *have forty winks*, you have a short sleep or rest, generally during the day. *Dad likes to have forty winks after a game of golf.* |
| **hit the hay/sack** | When you*hit the hay (*or *hit the sack)*, you go to bed. *The boys were so exhausted that they hit the hay as soon as they reached the campsite.* |
| **lie in** | If you*lie in,* you stay in bed after the normal time for getting up. *Great!  Tomorrow I'm not on duty so I can lie in!* |
| **out like a light** | If a person is *out like a light,* they are so tired that they fall asleep very quickly. *As soon as his head touched the pillow, he was out like a light.* |
| **ready to drop** | Someone who is *ready to drop* is extremely tired and nearly too exhausted to stay standing. *I've been shopping all day with Judy.  I'm ready to drop!* |
| **sleep like a log** | If you *sleep like a log,*you sleep deeply or soundly. *After a day at the beach, I usually sleep like a log.* |
| **sleep on it** | If you take time (until the next day) to think something over before making a decision, you *sleep on it.* *I suggest you sleep on it.  You can give me your decision  tomorrow.* |
| **not *sleep* a wink not get a wink of sleep** | If someone *doesn't get a wink of sleep*, they don't sleep a all. *It was so noisy in the hotel, I didn't get a wink of sleep.* |
| **not lose (any) *sleep*** | When something happens that in your opinion is not a cause for worry, you can say that you will*not lose (any) sleep over it*. *I've mislaid the book but I'm not going to lose any sleep over it.* |
| **let *sleeping* dogs lie** | If you tell someone to *let sleeping dogs lie*, you are asking them not to interfere with a situation because they could cause problems. *Look, they've settled their differences.  It's time to let sleeping dogs lie.* |
| **sleeping partner** | This term refers to a person who invests in a business without taking an active part in its management, and whose association with the enterprise is not public knowledge. *He works alone but his business is partly financed by a sleeping partner.* |

*English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions*

***Shopping***

(Idioms :   bargain hunting  →  window shopping )

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| **bargain hunting** | Spend time in the shops looking for items to buy at the lowest price. *During the sales I go bargain hunting with my friends!* |
| **it's a bargain** | Said when an article is well below the usual price. *That handbag goes beautifully with the dress, and at that price it's a bargain!* |
| **I can't afford it** | Not have enough money to buy something *I'd love that jacket but I can't afford it!* |
| **it costs an arm and a leg** | If an article or service costs an arm and a leg, it is very expensive indeed. *The diamond engagement ring cost an arm and a leg!* |
| **it costs a fortune** | Something that costs a fortune is very expensive. *Look at the price of that bag - it costs a fortune!* |
| **it's a steal** | This expression means that something is so cheap that it’s almost as if you haven't paid anything for it. *At that price it's a steal. You won't find it cheaper in any other shop.* |
| **it's good value for money** | Something that is good value for money is worth the money spent on it. *The quality is excellent so it's good value for money.* |
| **it's a bit pricey** | This expression means that something is a bit expensive. *Their clothes are a bit pricey but they have a wonderful selection* |
| **it's a rip-off** | Something that costs much more than it should is called a "rip-off". *$10 for an orange juice? That's a rip-off!* |
| **shop around** | If you*shop around,*you visit a number of shops selling similar articles in order to compare the prices. *You can usually save money by shopping around.* |
| **shop till you drop** | If you*shop till you drop,* you go shopping for a very long time, until you are exhausted. *If you go to London with Ashley, you'll shop till you drop, so take comfortable shoes*! |
| **shopping spree** | If you go on *a shopping spree*, you enjoy a lively outing, usually with much spending of money. *Liza is planning to go on a shopping spree as soon as she gets her bonus.* |
| **shopping therapy** | This term refers to the idea that buying things can make you feel better. *A little shopping therapy can usually cheer up bored teenagers.* |
| **splash out** | If  you splash out on something, you buy it even though it costs a lot of money. *When he got a promotion Andy splashed out on a brand new car.* |
| **window shopping** | When people go *window shopping,* they look at things in shop windows, without actually purchasing anything. *I haven't been paid yet,  so I can only go window shopping.* |

*English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions*

***Secrets - Discretion***

(Idioms, page 1 :  behind closed doors  →  let cat out of bag)

|  |  |
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| **behind closed doors** | If something takes place *behind closed doors*, it is done privately or in secret, with no observers or intruders. *The matter was discussed behind closed doors.* |
| **bite your tongue** | If you*bite your tongue*, you try not to say what you really think or feel. *It was difficult for me not to react; I had to bite my tongue.* |
| **cover your tracks** | If you *cover your tracks*, you conceal or destroy evidence of what you have been doing or where you have been. *Charlie was sorry he hadn't covered his tracks better when his wife discovered he had been unfaithful.* |
| **dark horse** | If you refer to someone as *a dark horse* you mean that they are secretive or that little is known about them. *I can't say I know my neighbour.  He's a bit of a dark horse.* |
| **in the*dark*** | If someone is kept or left*in the dark* about something, they are not informed about it. *The personnel was kept in the dark about the merger until the last minute.* |
| **dumb/close as an oyster** | Someone who is as *dumb*or as *close as an oyste*r will never reveal something told in confidence or betray a secret. *Sophie will never repeat what you tell her.  She's as dumb as an oyster.* |
| **fly on the wall** | A person who discretely watches a situation without being noticed is called a *fly on the wall.* *I'd like to be a fly on the wall when the management discusses my project.* |
| **give the game away** | If you *give the game away*, you reveal a secret or a plan, often unintentionally. *He hoped nobody in the hotel would recognize him, but an employee gave the game away.* |
| **good walls make good neighbours** | This expression means that respecting one another's privacy helps create a good relationship between neighbours. *We try not to disturb the people next door. Good walls make good neighbours!* |
| **hold your tongue** | If you *hold your tongue,* you stay silent and say nothing. *Harry was of a different opinion but he decided to hold his tongue.* |
| **keep a low profile** | A person who *keeps a low profile* tries not to attract public attention. *The inventor is a discreet man who keeps a low profile.* |
| **keep under your hat** | To *keep something under one's hat* means to keep a secret. *My boss has promised me a promotion, but it's not official yet, so keep it under your hat.* |
| **keep under wraps** | If something is *kept under wraps,* it is held secret and not revealed to anyone. *The plan was kept under wraps until the contract as officially signed*. |
| **let cat out of the bag** | If you*let the cat out of the bag*, you reveal a secret, often unintentionally. *When the child told her grandmother about the plans for her birthday, she let the cat out of the bag.  It was supposed to be a secret!* |
| **like a thief in the night** | Someone who acts*like a thief in the night*does something secretly or in an unexpected manner. *He left the company like a thief in the night, without telling his colleagues or saying goodbye.* |
| **lips are sealed** | If you say that your *lips are sealed,* you  promise not to reveal a secret. *I promise I won't tell anyone. My lips are sealed.* |
| **mum's the word** | To say*'mum's the word'*means that the subject or plan is a secret and must not be revealed. *We're organizing a surprise birthday party, so mum's the work - OK?* |
| **off the record** | If you say something *off the record,* you do not want anyone to repeat it publicly. *His comment was made off the record, and shouldn't have been published.* |
| **on the QT** | Something that is done on the QT is done quietly or discreetly. *They got married on the QT last summer and told nobody.* |
| **on the sly** | If you do something *on the sly*, you do it secretly or furtively. *He made such quick progress that the others suspected him of having private lessons on the sly.* |
| **open secret** | A fact that is supposed to be a secret but is actually widely known is called an*open secret.* *It's an open secret that Paul and Emily are living together.* |
| **quiet as a mouse** | When someone is as *quiet as a mouse,* they make no noise at all. *The burglar was a quiet as a mouse as he moved around the house.* |
| **spill the beans** | If you *spill the beans,* you reveal a secret or talk about something private. *Come on!  Spill the beans!  What did he say?* |
| **in strict confidence** | If you say something *in strict confidence,*you tell it as a secret not to be revealed. *Please don't repeat this.  I'm telling it to you in strict confidence.* |
| **sweep under the rug** | If you *sweep something under the rug* (or carpet), you try to hide it or keep it secret because it is embarrassing. *They tried unsuccessfully to sweep the scandal under the rug.* |
| **trade secret** | This term refers to the secrecy of a company's production methods but is often used teasingly. *"Can you give me the recipe for your lemon meringue pie?"  " No way - that's a trade secret!"* |
| **truth will out** | This expression means that despite efforts to conceal the facts, the truth cannot be hidden forever. *I don't know if the police gave the full details, but inevitably truth will out.* |

*English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions*

***Safety - Danger***

(Idioms, page 1 :  batten down the hatches   →   by a hair's breadth)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **batten down the hatches** | | When you*batten down the hatches*, you prepare yourself for danger or a forthcoming difficult period, like a ship preparing for a storm. *Here comes that trouble-making guy. Batten down the hatches!* | |
| **calculated risk** | | A *calculated risk* is a risk taken with full knowledge of the dangers involved. *The company took a calculated risk when they hired Sean straight out of college.* | |
| **throw caution to the wind** | | If you*throw caution to the wind*, you start taking risks and stop worrying about the danger involved. *I decided to throw caution to the wind and invest in my best friend's new company*. | |
| **close shave** | | This term describes a situation where an accident or a disaster nearly happened. *I almost hit the child who ran out in front of my car.  It was a close shave*. | |
| **coast is clear** | | To say that*the coast is clear*means that there is no danger in sight or that nobody can see you. *OK. The dog has gone inside. The coast is clear.* | |
| **cry wolf** | | To *cry wolf* is to call for help when you are not really in danger.   As a result, nobody believes you when you really need help. *There's Mary screaming again! Does she really have a problem or is she just crying wolf again?* | |
| **dice with death** | | If you put your life at risk by doing something very dangerous, you *dice with death.* *Going mountain-climbing alone is dicing with death.* | |
| **dicey situation** | | Any situation that is potentially risky or dangerous is called a *dicey situation.* *The politician put himself in a dicey situation by getting involved with an intern.* | |
| **false move** | | In a dangerous or risky situation, if you make a*false move*, you do something which may have unpleasant consequences. *He is under close surveillance. If he makes one false move he'll be arrested.* | |
| **fraught with danger** | | An activity or situation that is f*raught with danger*is full of risks or serious difficulties. *His journey across the mountains was fraught with danger.* | |
| **by a hair's breadth** | | If you avoid or miss something *by a hair's breadth*, you only just manage to escape from a danger. *A slate fell off the roof and missed the child by a hair's breadth.* | |
| **hang on for dear life** | If you*hang (or hold) on for dear life,* you are in a dangerous situation and grip something firmly so as not to fall. *Andy took his mother on the back of his motorbike where she hung on for dear life!* | | |
| **live to tell the tale** | Someone who*lives to tell the tale* survives a terrible experience. *Only two members of the expedition lived to tell the tale.* | | |
| **look before you leap** | This is something you say when advising someone to think carefully about the possible dangers before doing something. *Don't decide too quickly.  Look before you leap!* | | |
| **no-go area** | *A  no-go area is an area, particularly in a city, where it is dangerous to go. Tourists have been advised to avoid parts of the city which have become no-go areas.* | | |
| **out of harm's way** | If you put something*out of harm's way*, you put it in a safe place where it won't be damaged. *I'm going to put this glass bowl out of harm's way so that it doesn't get broken.* | | |
| **play with fire** | People who take unnecessary risks or behave in a dangerous way are *playing with fire.* *Driving alone on isolated roads in this weather is playing with fire.* | | |
| **put your head on the block** | If you put yourself in a dangerous situation where you risk losing your job or your reputation if things go wrong, you *put your head on the block.* *Jenny asked me to recommend her son for the job, but I'm not putting my head on the block for someone I hardly know.* | | |
| **ride it out  ride out the storm** | If you manage to survive a dangerous or very unpleasant situation, like a ship sailing through a storm, you*ride it out.* *His business was hit by the recession but he managed to ride it out.* | | |
| **risk life and limb** | If you*risk life and limb,* you are in danger of death or serious injury. *The roads are icy today;  you'll risk life and limb if you go by car.* | | |
| **in safe hands** | If something is*in safe hands*, it is being looked after by a reliable person or organisation, and is therefore at no risk. *I'll look after Jamie while you go shopping.  Don' worry - he'll be in safe hands.* | | |
| **on the safe side** | If you do something to be*on the safe side,* you do it as a precaution, to avoid any risks. *I think I locked the door but I'll check again to be on the safe side.* | | |
| **safety in numbers** | | | This expression means that being part of a group makes people feel more secure and more confident when taking action. *None of the group went sightseeing alone, knowing there was safety in numbers.* |
| **sail close to the wind** | | | If you *sail close to the wind,*you do something dangerous or act just within the limits of what is legal or acceptable. *He seems to invest his money well although he often sails close to the wind.* |
| **save one's neck/skin** | | | If you manage to escape from serious danger or trouble, you *save your skin (or neck). He saved his skin by reversing off the bridge just before it collapsed*. |
| **skating on thin ice** | | | If you are*skating on thin ice,* you are doing or saying something risky, or something that could cause trouble. *Don't mention that subject during the negotiations or you could be skating on thin ice.* |
| **at *stake*** | | | Someone who has a lot*at stake*is in a risky situation, with a lot to be won or lost. *He was nervous about signing the agreement because there was a lot at stake.* |
| **take cover** | | | When someone*takes cover,*they hide from a danger, or bad weather, in a place where they find protection. *As soon as the explosion was heard, people ran to take cover.* |
| **take life in one's own hands** | | | To say that someone is *taking their life in their hands* means that they are taking the risk of being killed. *If you drive home on this icy road, you'll be taking your life in your hands.* |
| **watch one's step** | | | If you tell someone to*watch their step,* you are advising them to be careful how they behave in order to avoid danger. *There is zero tolerance in this school for bad behaviour, so watch your step!* |
| **wrapped up in cotton wool** | | | Someone who is *wrapped up in cotton wool* is over-protected from dangers and risks. *Their children are kept wrapped up in cotton wool.* |

# *English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions*

## *Relationships*

### (social - working - personal)

(Idioms, page 1 :  birds of a feather  → know someone inside out)

|  |  |  |  |
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| **birds of a feather flock together** | | | If two people are birds of a feather, they are very similar in many ways, so they naturally spend time together. *No wonder they get on well.  They're birds of a feather!* |
| **build bridges** | | | If a person builds bridges between opposing groups, they help them to cooperate and understand each other better. *A mediator is trying to build bridges between the local community and the owners of the new plant.* |
| **cut loose** | | | If someone cuts loose or is cut loose, they stop being influenced or controlled by another person or group. *He's thirty years old and still hasn't cut loose from his family*. |
| **see eye to eye with someone** | | | If you see eye to eye with somebody, you agree with them. *I'm glad we see eye to eye on the choice of colour scheme.* |
| **fair-weather friend** | | | Someone who acts as a friend when times are good, and is not there when you are in trouble, is called a fair-weather friend. *I thought I could count on Bill, but I've discovered he's just a fair-weather friend.* |
| **get on like a house on fire** | | | Two people who get on like a house on fire have similar interests and quickly become good friends. *As soon as Sarah met her brother's girlfriend, they got on like a  house on fire.* |
| **get a raw deal** | | | If you say that some has got a raw deal, you think they have been treated unfairly or badly. |
| **go with the flow** | | | If you go with the flow, you follow the general tendency and go along with whatever happens. *When my colleagues organise an office party, I just go with the flow.* |
| **good walls make good neighbours** | | | This expression means that respecting one another's privacy helps create a good relationship between neighbours. *We try not to disturb the people next door. Good walls make good neighbours!* |
| **play gooseberry** | | | If you play gooseberry, you join or accompany two people who have a  romantic relationship and want to be alone. *They invited me to join them but I didn't want to play gooseberry.* |
| **herding cats** | | | This expression refers to the difficulty of coordinating a situation which involves people who all want to act independently. *Organizing an outing for a group of people from different countries is like herding cats!* |
| **be an item** | | | To say that two people are an item means that they are involved in a romantic relationship. *So Sally and Harry are an item, are they?* |
| **know someone inside out** | | | If you know someone inside out, you know them very well. *Sue and Anne have been friends since childhood.  They know each other inside out.* |
| **keep at arm's length** | If you *keep someone at arm's length*, you do not allow yourself to become too friendly with them. *It's not easy to become friends with Sophie; she tends to keep everyone at arm's length.* | | |
| **kowtow to others** | If you are very respectful and submissive, giving way to the wishes of a person or organisation in authority in order to please them, you *kowtow to them.* *Mark refused to kowtow to the committee and decided to work as a consultant.* | | |
| **at loggerheads** | If you are*at loggerheads* with a person or organisation, you disagree very strongly with them. *The management and the trade unions are at loggerheads over the decision to close down the plant.* | | |
| **move in the same circles** | When people*move in the same circles,* they socialize with others who have a similar background, interests or lifestyle. *I've never met the Duchess personally. We don't move in the same circles!* | | |
| **noddiing terms** | If you are *on nodding terms* with someone, you don't know them very well, just well enough to say 'hello' when you meet them. *We haven't made any friends yet but we're on nodding terms with our neighbours.* | | |
| **rob the cradle** | If you*rob the cradle,*you have a romantic relationship with someone who is much younger than yourself. *My uncle Ted is dating a twenty-year-old girl.  That's really robbing the cradle!* | | |
| **rub shoulders** | If you *rub shoulders*with someone, you have an opportunity to meet and talk to that person, especially someone wealthy, famous or distinguished. *In her in public relations, she sometimes rubs shoulders with famous people.* | | |
| **run with the hare and hunt with the hounds** | If you*run with the hare and hunt with the hounds,* you want to stay on friendly terms with both sides in a quarrel. *Bob always wants to keep everyone happy, but he can't run with the hare and  hunt with the hounds this time - the issue is too importan*t. | | |
| **same page/wavelength** | If you are*on the same page*or *the same wavelength*as someone else, you have the same understanding or think in a similar way. *We rarely argue.  We're generally on the same wavelength.* | | |
| **significant other** | The term*'significant other*' refers to a person, such as a spouse, partner or lover, with whom you have a long-term relationship. *Harry says he makes no decisions without consulting his significant other.* | | |
| **speed networking** | This term refers to a relatively new urban trend which consists in making a potential business contact by briefly talking to a series of people at an organised event and exchanging contact details. | | |
| **starter marriage** | A*starter marriage* is a short-lived first marriage that ends in divorce with no kids, no property and no regrets. | | |
| **stormy relationship** | If you have *a stormy relationship* with someone, you have a lot of arguments and disagreements. *After a very stormy relationship, they decided to separate.* | | |
| **speak the same language** | | If two or more people*speak the same language,* they have similar opinions or ideas, so they understand each other very well. *We work well together because we speak the same language.* | |
| **strange bedfellows** | | This expression refers to the unusual or unlikely association of two or more people, companies or states. *A car manufacturer and a bakery - strange bedfellows don't you think?* | |
| **thick as thieves** | | To say that two people are *as thick as thieves* means that they are very close friends who are very loyal to each other. *Chris always takes Danny's side.  They're as thick as thieves* | |
| **tied to someone's apron strings** | | If one person is*tied to another's apron strings,*they remain dependent at an age when they should be independent. *All his decisions are influenced by his mother.  He's still tied to her apron strings.* | |
| **two's company ... three's a crowd** | | This is said of two people, particularly lovers, who would prefer to be alone together rather than to have someone else with them. *I'd rather not come to the cinema with you, thanks.  Two's company ...!* | |
| **two-time somebody** | | If one person*two-times*another, they cheat on their partner by having a romantic relationship with another person at the same time. *Sally left Harry when she discovered he was two-timing her.* | |
| **walking papers** | | If you are given your*walking papers,* your contract or a relationship has ended. *After causing a diplomatic incident, Carter got his walking papers.* | |

*English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions*

***Problems - Difficulties***

(idioms, page 1 :  achilles heel →  cloud on the horizon)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **achilles heel** | This expression refers to a vulnerable area or a weak spot, in an otherwise strong situation, that could cause one's downfall or failure. *He's extremely intelligent, but his inability to speak in public is his Achilles heel.* | | | | | |
| **alarm bells ringing** | If something*sets the alarm bells ringing*, it makes you begin to worry, because it shows that there may be a problem. *Alarm bells started to ring when my old neighbour didn't open his shutters all day and didn't answer his phone.* | | | | | |
| **asking for trouble** | Someone who is *asking for trouble* is behaving so stupidly that he/she is likely to have problems. *Driving fast on these roads is really asking for trouble!* | | | | | |
| **back to the wall** | If you have your *back to the wall*, you are in serious difficulty. *With his back to the wall, the supplier had to accept the deal.* | | | | | |
| **ball and chain** | This term refers to a burden or problem that ties you down and prevents you from doing what you want. It can also refer to one's spouse. *Our holiday home has become a ball and chain - it's too much work!* | | | | | |
| **bane of one's life** | To say that something is the *bane of your life* means that it is the cause of your problems or your unhappiness. *The heating system is always breaking down. It's the bane of my life!* | | | | | |
| **bite off more than you can chew** | If you*bite off more than you can chew*, you try to do something that is too difficult for you, or more than you can manage. *As soon as I started to translate the report, I realized that I had bitten off more than I could chew.* | | | | | |
| **on the blink** | If a machine is *on the blink*, it is not working properly and needs servicing or repair. *What a nuisance! The photocopier is on the blink again.* | | | | | |
| **break the back of the beast** | If someone*breaks the back of the beast*, they succeed in overcoming a major difficulty. *After hours of effort, the technicians finally broke the back of the beast and turned the electricity back on again.* | | | | | |
| **can of worms** | To describe a situation as a*can of worms* means that it is complicated, unpleasant and difficult to deal with. *The discovery of the transfer of funds turned out to be a real can of worms*. | | | | | |
| **carry the can** | If you *carry the can* for another person, you accept blame or take responsibility for something that goes wrong, even if it is not your fault or only partly. *The author didn't turn up for the interview and his agent had to carry the can.* | | | | | |
| **catch 22** | A *catch 22* situation refers to a frustrating situation where you cannot do one thing without doing a second, and you cannot do the second before doing the first. *I can't get a job without a work permit, and I can't get a work permit without a job.  It's a catch 22 situation!* | | | | | |
| **chill wind** | If you face or feel the *chill wind* of something, you are beginning to encounter the problems or trouble it causes. M*any building companies are facing the chill wind of the recession.* | | | | | |
| **cloud on the horizon** | | A problem or difficulty that is predictable, or seems likely to arise in the future, is called a*cloud on the horizon.* *They are happily married and for the moment there appear to be no clouds on the horizon.* | | | | |
| **come to a head** | | If a problem or difficult situation *comes to a head*, it reaches a point where action has to be taken. *The conflict came to a head yesterday when rioting broke out in the streets.* | | | | |
| **come hell or high water** | | If you say that you will do something *come hell or high wat*er, you mean that you will do it in spite of the difficulties involved. *Come hell or high water, I've got to be on time for the interview.* | | | | |
| **come out in the wash** | | This expression is used to tell someone not to worry about a mistake or problem because it won't have any serious effect and everything will work out all right. *Yes, he was furious when it happened, but don't worry - it'll all come out in the wash*. | | | | |
| **cross to bear** | | A person who has a *cross to bea*r have a serious problem or heavy responsibility that they must accept because they cannot change it. *Alzheimer's is a cross to bear for the whole family.* | | | | |
| **cross that bridge when we come to it** | | This is another way of saying 'we will deal with that problem when it occurs and not worry about it before'. *"What will happen if we can't repay the loan?" "We'll cross that bridge when we come to it."* | | | | |
| **crux of the matter** | | The most vital or main part of a problem is called*the crux of the matter.* *The crux of the matter is that he's too old to live alone in that big house.* | | | | |
| **dead man walking** | | A *dead man walkin*g is someone who will inevitably be in great trouble very soon, especially a person who is about to lose their job or position. *Because of the way he handled the recent riots, the minister is a dead man walking.* | | | | |
| **dodge a bullet** | | If you *dodge a bullet*, you narrowly avoid a very serious problem or a disaster. *I dodged a bullet when I missed the plane.  It crashed just after take-off.* | | | | |
| **elephant in the room** | | A problem that no one wants to discuss, but is so obvious that it cannot be ignored, is called *an elephant in the room*. *Let's face it, his work is unsatisfactory. It's an elephant in the room that we need to discuss.* | | | | |
| **fat hits the fire** | | When trouble breaks out, or a situation deteriorates as a result of something said or done, it is said that *the fat hits the fire*. *The situation was already tense, but the fat hit the fire when Larry was accused of cheating.* | | | | |
| **get to the bottom of** | | If you *get to the bottom of* a problem or mystery, you solve it by finding out the true cause of it. *We have a problem of goods disappearing during transport. Hopefully the investigation will get to the bottom of it.* | | | | |
| **go haywire** | | | | If something *goes haywire*, it becomes disorganised or goes out of control. *The photocopier has gone completely haywire. It's only printing half of each page!* | | |
| **go pear-shaped** | | | | If a plan or project *goes pear-shaped*, it either goes wrong or it produces an undesirable result. *Jane organised a treasure hunt in the park for the kids but it all went pear-shaped and everyone was disappointed.* | | |
| **go through the mill** | | | | If you *go through the mill*, you experience a very difficult period, or are exposed to rough treatment. *When I was an intern, I was put through the mill.  Nothing went unnoticed.* | | |
| **when the going gets tough ...** | | | | This expression means that when faced with a difficult or dangerous situation, strong people take action in order to solve the problem. *Tom has a positive attitude. He often says 'when the going gets tough, the tough get going'.* | | |
| **grasp/clutch at straws** | | | | If you are in a desperate situation and you *grasp at straws,* you try any method, even if it has little chance of success, in an attempt to find a solution. *In his search for a cure, he turned to a faith healer, knowing that he was grasping at straws.* | | |
| **hang out to dry** | | | | If you abandon someone who is in difficulty, without giving any assistance or support, you *hang them out to dry. You'll get no help from Jack. He'll hang you out to dry if your plan fails.* | | |
| **high and dry** | | | | If you are*left high and dry,* you find yourself in a difficult situation without help or resources. *When her husband walked out on her, Amanda was left high and dry with two kids to raise.* | | |
| **in dire straits** | | | | If a person or organisation is*in dire straits,* they are in a very difficult situation. *The loss of major contracts has put the company in dire straits.* | | |
| **in the lurch** | | | | If something leaves you *in the lurch*, it leaves you in a difficult or embarrassing situation. *When Paul missed the last bus, he was left in the lurch.* | | |
| **in over your head** | | | | If you are *in over your head,* you are involved in something that is too difficult for you to handle. *I accepted to organise the festival, but I quickly realized that I was in over my head.* | | |
| **juggle frogs** | | | | A person who is*juggling frogs* is trying to deal with many different tasks at the tame time and finding the situation difficult. *I've got so many things to do at the moment, I feel like I'm juggling frogs!* | | |
| **last resort** | | | | To say that you would so something as*a last resort*means that it is the last thing you would do if you were desperate and all other courses of action had failed. *I still haven't found a hotel for the night;  I can always sleep in the car as a last resort!* | | |
| **(see) light at end of tunnel** | | | | If you *see light at the end of the tunnnel*, you see signs of hope for the future after a long period of difficulty. *Sales dropped heavily last year but we're beginning to see light at the end of the tunnel.* | | |
| **millstone around your neck** | | | | | Something described as a *millstone around your neck* refers to a problem or responsibility that becomes a burden and a source of worry. *The money he borrowed became a millstone around his ne*ck. | |
| **be murder** | | | | | If something*is murder,* it is very difficult or uncomfortable. *The journey home through the storm was absolute murder!* | |
| **necessary evil** | | | | | If you say that something is a *necessary evil,* you don't like it but you understand that it has to exist and be accepted. *Vaccinations are a necessary evil if you want to travel.* | |
| **one's number is up** | | | | | To say that *one's number is up* means that either a person is in serious difficulty and something bad is going to happen, or the time has come when they will die. *The police have located the escaped prisoner so it looks as if his number is up!* | |
| **ostrich strategy/politics** | | | | | Someone who adopts an *ostrich strategy or policy*chooses to ignore or evade an obvious problem in the hope that it will resolve itself or disappear. *Adopting an ostrich strategy will only make matters worse - we've got to find a solution.* | |
| **out of sync** | | | | | If two movements or actions are*out of sync*, they are not coordinated and are not taking place at the same time or at the same speed. *The traffic lights are out of sync and causing a lot of confusion.* | |
| **out of whack** | | | | | If something is *out of whack,* it is not working properly or is not in good order. *The dishwasher is making a funny noise. Something must be out of whack.* | |
| **paper over the cracks** | | | | | To say that someone is *papering over the cracks* means that they are concealing a problem rather than dealing with it effectively. *The measures taken to reduce unemployment are just paper over the cracks.* | |
| **pass the buck** | | | | | If you say that someone is*passing the buck,* you are accusing them of not taking responsibility for a problem and letting others deal with it instead. *Whenever a customer comes to complain, she always finds a way of looking busy - a great way of passing the buck!* | |
| **in a *pickle*** | | | | | If you are *in a pickle,* you are in a difficult situation and need help. *My car won't start and the trains are on strike today, so I'm in a real pickle!* | |
| **(no) *quick* fix** | | | | | To say that there is no *quick fix* to a problem means that there is no simple solution. *There is no quick fix for unemployment; major reforms are necessary.* | |
| **put on a brave face** | | | | | When confronted with difficulties, if you*put on a brave face,* you try to look cheerful and pretend that the situation is not as bad as it is. *Even in the worst of times she put on a brave face.* | |
| **saved by the bell** | | | | | If you are *saved by the bell,* something happens at the last minute to rescue you from a difficult situation. *Saved by the bell! A friend arrived just when I realized I had no money for the parking meter.* | |
| **scratch the surface** | | | | | When you only *scratch the surface of* a problem or subject, you deal with only a small part of it. *Some countries are only scratching the surface of their environment problems.* | |
| **where the *shoe*pinches** | | | | | | When people talk about*'where the shoe pinches'*, they are referring to an area that is often a source of problems or difficulties. *She's sure the public transport system works perfectly, but she'll find out where the shoe pinches when she starts using it!* |
| **put a *spanner* in the works** | | | | | | To*put a spanner in the works* (or *throw a (monkey) wrench*) means to cause problems and prevent something from happening as planned. *A new motorway was planned but a group of ecologists managed to put a spanner in the works.* |
| **spell trouble** | | | | | | If something*spells trouble*, it signifies possible problems in the future. *The prolonged cold weather spells trouble for this year's harvest.* |
| **spiral out of control** | | | | | | When difficulties or costs *spiral out of control,*they get worse or increase continuously, creating a situation that becomes difficult to manage. *Some items were expensive but we were careful not to let the costs spiral out of control.* |
| **on a *sticky* wicket** | | | | | | If you find yourself *on a sticky wicket,* you are in a situation that is difficult to deal with. *They've refused to sign the contract so we're on a sticky wicket now!* |
| **stir up a hornet's nest** | | | | | | If you*stir up a hornet's nest,* you do something which causes a commotion and provokes criticism and anger. *His letter to the Board stirred up a real hornet's nest.* |
| **stop the rot** | | | | | | When you prevent a situation from deteriorating, especially in business or politics, you *stop the rot.* *There was so much conflict in the office that a new manager was appointed to stop the rot.* |
| **stumbling block** | | | | | | A problem or obstacle that prevents you from achieving something is*a stumbling block. My father adapted quite well but the language was always a stumbling block for my mother.* |
| **take the bull by the horns** | | | | | | To take*the bull by the horns* means that a person decides to act decisively in order to deal with a difficult situation or problem. *When the argument turned into a fight, the bar owner took the bull by the horns and called the police.* |
| **take the easy way out** | | | | | | If you*take the easy way out*, you choose the easiest way to deal with a difficult situation, even if it is not the best solution. *The weather conditions were so bad that Mary took the easy way out and cancelled her appointment.* |
| **tar baby** | | | | | | This term refers to a sticky situation or problem for which it is virtually impossible to find a solution. *He was advised not to get involved in the controversy which was considered a 'tar-baby' issue.* |
| **teething problems** | | | | | | The difficulties encountered during the initial stage of an activity or project are called*teething problems.* *We had some teething problems when we first opened the bookshop, but now everything is okay.* |
| **thorny issue** | | | | | | If you are faced with*a thorny issue,* you have to deal with a difficult or unpleasant problem. *Copyright and content duplication are thorny issues these days.* |
| **throw money at** | | | If you*throw money at something*, you try to solve a problem by spending money on it, without using any other methods. *The refugee problem cannot be solved just by throwing money at it!* | | | |
| **throw it over the wall** | | | If someone*throws something over the wall,* they deal with part of a problem or project, then pass the responsibility to another person or department without any communication or coordination. *You can't just manufacture a product then throw it over the wall to the sales department!* | | | |
| **tide over** | | | If *you tide someone over,* you support them through a difficult period for a certain length of time. *With this weather it's impossible to get to the shops, but we have enough food to tide us over until next week.* | | | |
| **tight spot** | | | Someone who is*in a tight spot*is in a very difficult situation. *The recent strike has put the airline company in a tight spot.* | | | |
| **tip of the iceberg** | | | The *tip of the iceberg* is the part that is known of a problem or situation which is thought to be much more serious. *Journalists say that the report on corruption only examines the tip of the iceberg.* | | | |
| **trilemma** | | | This term is used for a situation which is even more difficult than a dilemma, because a choice must be made between three options that seem equally undesirable. | | | |
| **twist in the wind** | | | If someone is left to*twist in the wind*, they are left to face a difficult situation without any assistance or support. *He walked out of the press conference and left his agent twisting in the wind.* | | | |
| **unmitigated disaster** | | | An *unmitigated disaster* is a complete failure or a total catastrophe. *The organisation of the tournament was an unmitigated disaster!* | | | |
| **uphill battle** | | | A person faced with *an uphill battle*has to struggle against very unfavourable circumstances. *After the terrible accident, his recovery was an uphill battle all the way.* | | | |
| **vicious circle** | | | When the solution to a problem creates another problem similar to the original, or makes it worse, so that the process starts all over again, the situation is called*a vicious circle.* *I borrowed money to reimburse Paul. Now I've got to reimburse the bank, with interest.  It's a vicious circl*e. | | | |
| **wave a dead chicken** | | | When faced with a serious problem, if you take steps that you  know in advance will be futile, to show that you made an effort, you *wave a dead chicken.* *The TV set was permanently damaged, but the technician decided to wave a dead chicken to satisfy the old lady before announcing the bad news.* | | | |
| **wheels fall off** | | | When a situation gets out of control and everything starts to go wrong,*the wheels fall off.*  *The wheels fell off her career when she started taking drugs and cancelling concerts*. | | | |
| **without a hitch** | | | If something happens *without a hitch,* it takes place exactly as planned, without any difficulties. *The ceremony went off without a hitch, to our great relief!* | | | |
| **work cut out for you** | | | If you have to face a difficult task or a challenging situation, you *have your work cut out*for you. *I've got a month to reorganise the accounts department.  I have my work cut out for me!* | | | |
| **yoke around neck** | | | An obligation, commitment or restraint that becomes an oppressive burden is called *a yoke around one's neck.* *When John lost his job, the repayments on the house became a yoke around his neck.* | | | |

*English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions*

***Politeness - Manners***

(idioms :  black tie event   →   time-honoured practice)

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| **black tie event** | This expression refers to a formal event at which men are required to wear a dinner jacket, or tuxedo, and a black bow tie. *I need to know if it's going to be a casual get-together or a black tie event*. |
| **bow and scrape** | To say that someone is*bowing and scraping* means that they are being excessively polite or servile. *The President was greeted with much bowing and scraping.* |
| **the done thing** | The correct way to behave in a particular social situation is called*the done thing*. *Wearing jeans to play golf is not the done thing in this club.* |
| **excuse/pardon my French** | This expression is used as an apology for using crude or offensive language. *He's a bloody nuisance, if you'll excuse my French.* |
| **gatecrash** | If someone *gatecrashes,* they attend a private social event without being invited. *We need volunteers to keep an eye out for gatecrashers tonight.* |
| **mind/watch your language** | This is said to warn someone to be careful what they say so as not to upset or offend anyone. *Your grandfather doesn't tolerate rudeness, so mind your language when we go to visit him!* |
| **mind your Ps and Qs** | If you tell someone to *mind their Ps and Qs*, you are advising them to be careful about how they behave and what they say. *Politeness is very important to my grandparents, so mind your Ps and Qs.* |
| **overstep the mark** | If you *overstep the mark,* you go too far and upset someone by saying something or behaving in a way that is unacceptable. *Jenny is angry with her son.  He overstepped the mark when he called his grandfather an 'old fool'.* |
| **speak out of turn** | If someone*speaks out of turn,*either they intervene at the wrong moment or they say something tactless or inappropriate. *At the first meeting I was afraid of speaking out of turn.* |
| **stand on ceremony** | When people*stand on ceremony,*they behave in a very formal way. *We'd be delighted to come and see you but please don't stand on ceremony.* |
| **take French leave** | If you leave an official or social event without notifying the person who invited you, you*take French leave.* *Is Bill coming back for the closing speech or has he taken French leave?* |
| **time-honoured practice** | A custom that is universally respected, or a traditional way of doing something, is called*a time-honoured practice.* *Guests were greeted according to a time-honored practice.* |

*English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions*

***Plants  -  Flowers  -  Trees***

(idioms, page 1 :  nip in the bud →  green fingers)

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| **nip in the *bud*** | If you *nip* a problem or an unacceptable situation*in the bud*, you stop it at an early stage, before it develops or becomes worse. *He wanted to be a clown, but his parents soon nipped that idea in the bud.* | |
| **beat around the *bush*** | This expression is used to tell someone to say what they have to say, clearly and directly, even if it is unpleasant. *Stop beating around the bush. Just tell me what has been decided!* | |
| **old *chestnut*** | A story, joke or an idea that has been repeated so often that it has lost its novelty is referred to as an '*old chestnut'*. *The story about his boat capsizing has become an old chestnut!* | |
| **fresh as a *daisy*** | Someone who is *(as) fresh as a daisy* is lively and attractive, in a clean and fresh way. *I met Molly the other day.  She looked as fresh as a daisy.* | |
| **pushing up the *daisies*** | To say that someone is*pushing up the daisies* means that they are dead. *Old Johnny Barnes? He's been pushing up the daisies for over 10 years!* | |
| **lead up the *garden*path** | If someone*leads you up the garden path*, they deceive you by making you believe something which is not true. *I still haven't got the promotion I was promised.  I think my boss is leading me up the garden path!* | |
| **hit the *hay*** | When you*hit the hay (*or *hit the sack)*, you go to bed. *The boys were so exhausted that they hit the hay as soon as they reached the campsite.* | |
| **make *hay* while the sun shines** | This expression is used as an encouragement to take advantage of a good situation which may not last. *Successful athletes are advised to make hay while the sun shines*. | |
| **grass roots** | The term *grass roots* refers to the ordinary people who form the main body of an organisation. | |
| **(not) let the *grass* grow under feet** | If someone does*not let the grass grow under their feet,* they do not delay in getting something done. *As soon as he received the permit, he started to build.  He never lets the grass grow under his feet!* | |
| **green fingers** | To have*green fingers* means to be good at gardening. *My dad was born with green fingers. He's great with plants.* | |
| **shake like a *leaf*** | | If you *shake like a leaf,* you tremble with fear or nervousness. *At the beginning of the interview the candidate was shaking like a leaf.* |
| **turn over a new *leaf*** | | If a person*turns over a new leaf,*they decide to change their behaviour and lead a better life. *When Ted left prison, he was determined to turn over a new leaf.* |
| **root and branch** | | If an action is performed thoroughly or completely, it is done *'root and branch'. The causes of the disease must be eliminated root and branch.* |
| **come up *roses*** | | If things*come up roses*, the end result is successful or positive, even if there were difficult times. *After several disappointments, everything seems to be coming up roses for the tennis player this year.* |
| **sow seeds of suspicion** | | If someone's behaviour, or something they say, *sows the seeds of suspicion*, it leads people to suspect that they are guilty. *The fact that the boy spent a lot of money after the burglary sowed the seeds of suspicion in the neigbours' minds.* |
| **sow wild oats** | | A person, usually a man, who*sows their wild oats*goes through a period of carefree pleasure-seeking while they are young. *He was advised to sow his wild oats before he got married.* |
| **grasp at *straws*** | | If you are in a desperate situation and you *grasp at straws,* you try any method, even if it has little chance of success, in an attempt to find a solution. *In his search for a cure, he turned to a faith healer, knowing that he was grasping at straws.* |
| **thorn in your side** | | If you say that someone is *a thorn in your side,* you mean that they continually irritate or annoy you. *Jane finds her mother-in-law very irritating, a real thorn in her side!* |
| **barking up the wrong *tree*** | | A person who is *barking up the wrong tree* is doing the wrong thing, because their beliefs or ideas are incorrect or mistaken.  *The police are barking up the wrong tree if they think Joey stole the car - he can't drive!* |
| **can't see the*wood*for the *trees*** | | If someone *can't see the wood for the trees,* they are so concentrated on the details that they can't see the situation as a whole. *The new manager found the situation so complicated that he couldn't see the wood for the trees.* |
| **shrinking *violet*** | | A person referred to as*a shrinking violet* is a timid or shy person. *The witness was a shrinking violet who had difficulty expressing herself.* |
| **small *dog*, tall *weeds*** | | This expression is used to refer to someone who does not have the ability or the resources necessary to perform a task. *It may be too difficult for the trainee - small dog, tall weeds!* |

*English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions*

***Numbers - Quantities - Amounts***

(idioms, page 1 :  all told  →  five o'clock shadow)

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| **all told** | | | *All told* means the final number, when everything has been counted. *The number of visitors to the exhibition, all told, was 2543.* | |
| **ballpark figure** | | | If someone gives a *ballpark figure*, they give an approximate number or a rough estimate of the cost of something. *I don't know exactly how much it will cost, but a ballpark figure would be around $100 000.* | |
| **in dribs and drabs** | | | If something comes in *dribs and drabs,* it arrives little by little, in small amounts or numbers. I*nstead of the crowd expected, people arrived in dribs and drabs.* | |
| **have one over the *eight*** | | | If a person has had one *over the eight,* they are slightly drunk. *Don't listen to him!  Can't you see he's had one over the eight!* | |
| **at the *eleventh* hour** | | | If something happens *at the eleventh hour*, it happens when it is almost too late, or at the last possible moment. *Our team won after they scored a goal at the eleventh hour.* | |
| ***fifth* wheel** | | | This expression refers to a person who find themselves in a situation where their presence is unnecessary and as a result they feel useless. *Everyone seemed to have a specific role except me. I felt like a fifth wheel* | |
| **first and foremost** | | | This expression is used to state what you consider to be more important than anything else. *First and foremost I want to thank our hosts for their wonderful reception.* | |
| **first base** | | | When you*get to (or reach) first base*, you make progress or begin to have success with someone or something. *If you go to the interview dressed like that, you won't get to first base!* | |
| **first come first served** | | | This expression means that there will be no favouritism or preferential treatment. People will be served strictly in the order they arrive. *Tickets for the match will be sold on a 'first come first served' basis.* | |
| **(at) first hand** | | | If you experience something yourself directly, without any intermediary, you experience it*(at) first hand.* *Getting to see the performance (at) first hand is much better than watching it on television.* | |
| **first out of the gate** | | | If you are*first out of the gate,* you are the first to make a start at something that others have also accepted to do. *Sandra was so enthusiastic about the project that she was first out of the gate.* | |
| **in the *first* place** | | | Something that is done*in the first place* is done at the beginning, before anything else. *Why didn't you tell me he was your boyfriend in the first place?* | |
| **first water** | | | Something that is*of the first water*is of the finest or most exceptional quality (like being compared to a diamond). *The violinist gave a performance that was of the first water* | |
| **five finger discount** | | | If somebody gets a*five-finger discount*, they take something without paying.  In other words, they steal. *How could he afford that watch? Who knows - perhaps with a five-finger discount!* | |
| **five o'clock shadow** | | | This expression refers to a patch of stubble on the face of a man who hasn't shaved for at least a day. *He looked tired and had a five o'clock shadow.* | |
| **forty winks** | | If you *have forty winks*, you have a short sleep or rest, generally during the day. *Dad likes to have forty winks after a game of golf.* | | |
| **on all *fours*** | | If you are *on all fours*, you are down on your hands and knees. *When I arrived, he was on all fours playing with his grandchildren.* | | |
| **give or take (amount or quantity)** | | This term is used when expressing an amount or estimate that is not exactly right.  It means 'plus or minus', 'more or less', or 'approximately'. *The nearest town is about 100 miles away, give or take a few miles.* | | |
| **half the battle** | | This expression refers to a significant part of the effort or work needed to achieve something. *We've already obtained a loan for the project - that's half the battle!* | | |
| **half an eye** | | If you have or keep *half an eye* on something, you watch it without giving it your full attention. *She kept half an eye on the TV screen while she was preparing dinner.* | | |
| **half a mind** | | If you have *half a mind*to do something, you are thinking seriously about it but have not yet reached a decision. *I've half a mind to start up my own business but first I need some advice.* | | |
| **chance in a *million*** | | A *chance in a million* is a very small chance, or no chance at all, that something will happen. *There's a chance in a million of finding the key I lost on the golf course.* | | |
| **look like a *million*dollars** | | If you *look like a million dollars*, you look extremely good. *With a tan and a new hairstyle she looked a million dollars!* | | |
| **never in a *million* years** | | This expression means 'absolutely never'. *I will never in a million years understand why Anne married Bob.* | | |
| **nine-day wonder** | | An event which is *a nine-day wonder* causes interest, surprise or excitement for a short time, but it doesn't last. *His sudden departure was a nine-day wonder but he was soon forgotten.* | | |
| **nine times out of ten** | | When something happens *nine times out of ten,* it is what usually happens. *The public transport system is very bad. Trains arrive late nine times out of ten.* | | |
| **on cloud *nine*** | | A person who is *on cloud nine* is very happy because something wonderful has happened. *When the boss announced my promotion, I was on cloud nine!* | | |
| **dressed up to *nines*** | | To describe someone as*dressed up to the nines*means that they are wearing very smart or glamorous clothes. *Caroline must be going to a party - she's dressed up to the nines.* | | |
| **talk *nineteen* to the dozen** | | Someone who*talks nineteen to the dozen*speaks very quickly. *He was talking nineteen to the dozen so I didn't catch the whole story.* | | |
| **number cruncher** | | This is a humorous way of referring to someone who is an accountant or who is very good at working with numbers and calculations. *She's a number cruncher who perfectly understands the organisation's financial situation.* | | |
| **safety in *numbers*** | | This expression means that being part of a group makes people feel more secure and more confident when taking action. *None of the group went sightseeing alone, knowing there was safety in numbers.* | | |
| **one in the eye** | If an event or development is an unexpected defeat or disappointment for someone, it is*one in the eye* for that person. *My promotion was one in the eye for my ambitious colleague.* | | | |
| **one fell swoop** | If something is accomplished *at (*or*in) one fell swoop,* it is done in a single action, usually rapidly and ruthlessly. *The three houses were demolished at one fell swoop.* | | | |
| **one foot in the grave** | A person who is either very old or very ill and close to death has one*foot in the grave. It's no use talking to the owner.  The poor man has one foot in the grave.* | | | |
| **one good turn deserves another** | If someone helps you, it is natural and right to help them in return. *We helped Alex and Sara when they moved into their new house, just as they helped us last year; one good turn deserves another.* | | | |
| **one hand washes the other (and together they wash the face)** | This expression means that when people cooperate and work well together, there is a better chance of a achieving results. | | | |
| **one horse town** | A place referred to as a *one horse town* is a small, boring town where nothing much ever happens. *I wish my grandparents didn't live in that one-horse town.  It's such a boring place!* | | | |
| **one over the eight** | If a person has had one *over the eight,* they are slightly drunk. *Don't listen to him!  Can't you see he's had one over the eight!* | | | |
| **one step ahead** | When you are*one step ahead* of someone else, you achieve something faster than they do, or you have a slight advantage over them. *The company is successful because they're always one step ahead of their competitors.* | | | |
| **one track mind** | If  you have*a one-track mind,* you have a tendency to think about only one subject. *The boy has a one-track mind; all he thinks about is football!* | | | |
| **one too many** | Someone who has had *one too many* has drunk too much alcohol. *I think Tony's had one too many - he's talking rubbish.* | | | |
| **one's number is up** | To say that *one's number is up* means that either a person is in serious difficulty and something bad is going to happen, or the time has come when they will die. *The police have located the escaped prisoner so it looks as if his number is up!* | | | |
| **one's own undoing** | If you do something that is the cause of your own failure, loss or downfall, it is*your own undoing.*You can blame nobody but yourself. *If he continues to gamble like that, it will be his own undoing.* | | | |
| **one-upmanship** | This term refers to the art of gaining and keeping an advantage over other people. *He's a successful man, but his one-upmanship has left him with few friends.* | | | |
| **look out for number *one*** | If you take care of yourself first, and look after your own interests rather than those of other people, you*look out for number one*. *Andy's father told him that looking out for number one should be his first priority.* | | | |
| **play *second* fiddle** | | | | If you *play second fiddle*to another person, you accept to be second in importance to that person, or have a lower position. *John resented having to play second fiddle to the sales manager when the company was restructured.* | |
| **second a motion** | | | | During a meeting, if you *second a motion,* you formally agree with a proposal. *She seconded the motion to introduce flexible working hours.* | |
| **second nature** | | | | If something you do is *second nature* to you, it is something that you do easily or automatically because you have done it so often or for so long. *Skiing is second nature to Harry. He grew up in a ski resort.* | |
| **second to none** | | | | Something that is *second to none* is excellent or much better than any other. *The service was perfect and the food was second to none.* | |
| **on second thoughts** | | | | *'On second thoughts'* means that after giving the matter more thought, you have changed your mind. *My idea was to move to an apartment, but on second thoughts, I'd rather have a garden.* | |
| **in *seventh* heaven** | | | | If you are *in seventh heaven,* you are extremely happy. *Every time she wins a match, she's in seventh heaven!* | |
| **six of one and half a dozen of the other** | | | | This expression means that there is no real difference between two choices; both are equally good or equally bad. *I didn't know who to vote for. It was six of one and half a dozen of the other!* | |
| **at *sixes* and *sevens*** | | | | If someone is *at sixes and sevens,* they are in a state of confusion or not very well organised. *The managers were at sixes and sevens when they were informed of the Chairman's visit.* | |
| **a *thousand* times** | | | | This expresses exasperation at having constantly to repeat the same thing. *I've told you a thousand times to wipe your feet before coming in!* | |
| **catch*twenty two*** | | | | A *catch 22* situation refers to a frustrating situation where you cannot do one thing without doing a second, and you cannot do the second before doing the first. *I can't get a job without a work permit, and I can't get a work permit without a job.  It's a catch 22 situation!* | |
| **twenty-four-seven** | | | | This term refers to something which is available or happens twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. *The tourist office provided a list of 24-7 supermarkets in the area.* | |
| **two of a kind** | | | | People who are two of a kind are similar in character, attitude or tastes. *Pete and Ben are two of a kind; they enjoy sports and are very competitive.* | |
| **two can play at that game** | | | | You say this to tell someone that you can behave towards them in the same unpleasant way that they have behaved towards you. *He refuses to take my call?  Tell him two can play at that game!* | |
| **two-faced** | | | | Someone who is *two-faced* is deceitful or insincere;  they will say one thing to your face and something else when you are not there. *I don't trust Billy.  I find him two-faced.* | |
| **two left feet** | | | | If you have*two left feet,* you are clumsy or awkward in your movements. *I'm afraid I'm a bad dancer.  I've got two left feet!* | |
| **in two minds** | | | | If you are*in two minds* about something, you have difficulty deciding what to do. *I'm in two minds about whether or not to accept the offer.* | |
| **takes two to tango** | | | | You say this when you think that a difficult situation cannot be the fault of one person alone. *We've heard Fred's side of the story - but it takes two to tango!* | |

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| **two peas in a pod** | Two people who are*like two peas in a pod* are very similar in appearance. *The two brothers are very alike - they're like two peas in a pod!* |
| **in two shakes of a lamb's tail** | To do something*in two shakes of a lamb's tail* means to do it very quickly. *Wait for me.  I'll be ready in two shakes (of a lamb's tail).* |
| **two-time someone** | If one person*two-times*another, they cheat on their partner by having a romantic relationship with another person at the same time. *Sally left Harry when she discovered he was two-timing her.* |
| **two's company, three's a crowd** | This is said of two people, particulary lovers, who would prefer to be alone together rather than to have someone else with them. *I'd rather not come to the cinema with you, thanks.  Two's company ...!* |
| **lesser of*two* evils** | If you choose*the lesser of two evils*, you opt for the less unpleasant of two poor options. *I didn't want to go. Choosing the train instead of driving was the lesser of two evils; at least I could relax on the way.* |
| **no two ways about** | To say that there are *no two ways about something* means that there is only one suitable ay of dealing with something. *There are no two ways about it. You can't accept the money, so you must give it back.* |
| **that makes*two*of us** | This expression indicates agreement with what has just been said. *"I found his speech rather boring."  "That makes two of  us!"* |
| **put two and two together** | To *put two and two togethe*r means to reach the right conclusion based on what you see or the information you receive. *When she saw Jill and Ben holding hands, it wasn't hard to put two and two together!* |
| **zero in on something** | If you *zero in on* something, you focus all your attention on that particular thing. *The boss immediately zeroed in on the sales figures*. |
| **zero tolerance** | If an activity or a certain type of behaviour is given*zero tolerance*, it will not be accepted, not even once. *The authorities have announced zero tolerance for smoking in public buildings.* |

*English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions*

***Negotiations***

(idioms, page 1 :  above board  →  clinch a deal)

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| **above board** | If business negotiations are described as*above board*, they are open, honest and legal. *There are not secret negotiations.  Our dealings have always been above board.* | |
| **have an ace up your sleeve** | If you *have an ace up your sleeve*, you have something in reserve with which you can gain an advantage. *I'm well prepared for the negotiations. I've got an ace up my sleeve*. | |
| **hold all the aces** | A person or company who *holds all the aces* is in a very strong position because they have more advantages than anyone else. *With low production costs and excellent transport facilities, they seem to be holding all the aces..* | |
| **back to square one** | To say that someone is *back to square one* means that they have not succeeded in what they were trying to do, so they have to start again. *When they refused the terms of the contract, it was back to square one for the negotiators..* | |
| **back to the wall** | If you have your *back to the wall*, you are in serious difficulty. *With his back to the wall, the supplier had to accept the deal.* | |
| **beggars can't be choosers** | This expression means that you should not reject an offer if it is the only possibility you have. You have no choice. *"Beggars can't be choosers!"* | |
| **bend over backwards** | If you *bend over backwards*, you try very hard to do something, especially to please somebody. *The director bent over backwards to try and persuade them to accept our proposal.* | |
| **bide your time** | If you *bide your time*, you wait for a good opportunity to do something. *He's not hesitating, he's just biding his time, waiting for the price to drop.* | |
| **blank cheque** | If you give someone a*blank cheque*, you authorize them to do what they think is best in a difficult situation. *Tom was given a blank cheque and told to negotiate the best deal possible.* | |
| **bone of contention** | A*bone of contention* is a matter or subject about which there is a lot of disagreement. *The salaries have been agreed on, but opening on Sundays is still a bone of contention.* | |
| **bring nothing to the table** | If you participate in negotiations and*bring nothing to the table*, you have nothing of interest to offer the other side. *We'll never reach an agreement if we don't all bring something to the table.* | |
| **clinch a deal** | In a business relationship, if you *clinch a deal*, you reach agreement on a proposal or offer. *Paul's final argument enabled us to clinch the deal.* | |
| **drive a hard bargain** | | A person who*drives a hard bargain* always makes sure they gain advantage in a business deal. *Be prepared for tough negotiations with Dan. He drives a hard  bargain.* |
| **keep someone posted** | | If someone asks you to *keep them posted,* they want you to keep them informed about a situation. *Our agent promised to keep us posted on developments in the negotiations.* |
| **leave the door open** | | If you*leave the door open*, you behave in such a way as to allow the possibility of further action. *Both parties left the door open for further negotiations.* |
| **leave no stone unturned** | | If you try everything possible in order to achieve something, you*leave no stone unturned.* *The management left no stone unturned in their efforts to reach an agreement.* |
| **meet half-way** | | If you *meet someone half way*, you accept to make a compromise and give them part of what they are trying to obtain. *We can't agree to all your conditions but we could perhaps agree to meet half-way.* |
| **nitty-gritty** | | When people *get down to the nitty-gritty*, they begin to discuss the most important points or the practical details. *I was interested in the project, but we didn't get down to the nitty-gritty until his partner arrived.* |
| **play your cards right** | | If you *play your cards right*, you do all that is necessary in order to succeed or to obtain what you want. *If we play our cards right, we'll get the contract.* |
| **play for time** | | If you *play for time,* you try to delay or prevent something from happening in order to gain an advantage. *He decided to play for time in the hope that the price would decrease.* |
| **prepare the ground** | | When you *prepare the ground,* you try to make it easier for a future event or action to happen or be accepted. *The two foreign ministers prepared the ground for negotiations.* |
| **sell ice to Eskimos** | | This expression is used to describe a person who has the ability to persuade someone to accept something totally unnecessary or useless.  *It's not surprising he was named 'salesman of the year'. He could sell ice to Eskimos!* |
| **sign on dotted line** | | If you *sign on the dotted line,* you formally give your consent to something by signing an official document. *I consulted a lawyer before signing on the dotted line.* |
| **signed, sealed, and delivered** | | When an agreement, contract or treaty is *signed, sealed and delivered*, all the legal documents are in order. *It is hoped that the agreement will be signed, sealed and delivered before the end of the week.* |
| **skating on thin ice** | | If you are*skating on thin ice,* you are doing or saying something that could cause disagreement or trouble. *Don't mention that subject during the negotiations or you could be skating on thin ice.* |
| **sticking point** | | A *sticking point*is a controversial issue that causes an interruption or blocks progress in discussions or negotiations. *The choice of distributor was a sticking point in the negotiations.* |
| **take stock of the situation** | | If you*take stock of a situation*you assess all the aspects in order to form an opinion. *He took time to take stock of the situation before making a suggestion.* |
| **turn on/up the heat** | | If you *turn on* or *up the heat* on someone, you put pressure on them in order to obtain what you want. *If the goods are not delivered this week, we'll have to turn up the heat.* |

*English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions*

***Money - Finance - Wealth***

(Idioms page 1 :  back-of-the-envelope calculation → cut one's losses)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **back-of-the-envelope calculation** | | This expression refers to a quick approximate calculation done informally, as on the back of an envelope. *I don't need the exact amount.  Just give me a back-of-the-envelope calculation.* | | | | |
| **ballpark figure** | | If someone gives a *ballpark figure*, they give an approximate number or a rough estimate of the cost of something. *I don't know exactly how much it will cost, but a ballpark figure would be around $100 000.* | | | | |
| **bet your bottom dollar** | | If you *bet your bottom dollar*on something, you are absolutely certain of it. *Jack is very punctual.  You can bet your bottom dollar he'll be here at 9 o'clock on the dot.* | | | | |
| **tighten your belt** | | If you need to*tighten your belt,* you must spend your money carefully because there is less available. *Another bill?  I'll have to tighten my belt this month!* | | | | |
| **born with a silver spoon in your mouth** | | A person who is*born with a silver spoon in their mouth* is born into a very rich family. *She never has to worry about money; she was born with a silver spoon in her mouth.* | | | | |
| **on the breadline** | | People who live *on the breadline* have a very low income or barely enough money to survive. *Due to the recent crisis, there are more people on the breadline than ever before.* | | | | |
| **burn your fingers** | | If you *burn your fingers* (or*get your fingers burnt*), you suffer financially as a result of foolish behaviour. *Jack got his fingers burnt playing on the stock market.* | | | | |
| **cash cow** | | A product or service which is a regular source of income for a company is called a*cash cow.* *His latest invention turned out to be a real cash cow.* | | | | |
| **cash in your chips** | | If you*cash in your chips*, you sell something, especially shares, either because you need the money or because you think the value is going to fall. *Andy cashed in his chips as soon as business started to slow down.* | | | | |
| **chicken feed** | | An amount of money considered small or unimportant is called*chicken feed.* *I got a job during the holidays but the pay was chicken feed.* | | | | |
| **other side of the *coin*** | | When you want to mention a different or contradictory aspect of a situation, you refer to*the other side of the coin.*  *The house is lovely and spacious, but the other side of the coin is that it is far from shops and schools.* | | | | |
| **cost an arm and a leg** | | If something *costs an arm and a leg*, it is very expensive. *The house cost us an arm and a leg, but we have no regrets.* | | | | |
| **cost the earth** | | If something*costs the earth*, it is very expensive indeed. *She wears designer clothes that must cost the earth!* | | | | |
| **at all costs** | | If you are determined to obtain or achieve something *at all cost*s, you want it regardless of the expense, effort or sacrifice involved. *The journalist was determined at all costs to get a report from the war zone.* | | | | |
| **cut one's losses** | | If you end or withdraw from something that is already failing, in order to reduce the loss of money, time or effort invested in it,  you *cut your losses.* *The project is heading for failure.  Let's cut our losses before it's too late.* | | | | |
| **deep pockets** | A person or organisation who has *deep pockets* has a lot of money. *Andy's business is not doing well at the moment. He says he needs a friend with deep pockets!* | | | | | |
| **down payment** | When someone makes a *down payment*, they pay part of the total amount agreed when signing a purchase deal or contract. *Emma and Paul are excited.  They put a down payment on their first house yesterday.* | | | | | |
| **go Dutch** | To *go Dutch*with somebody means to share the cost of something such as a meal or a concert. *Young people today tend to go Dutch when they go out together.* | | | | | |
| **eat/dip into one's savings** | If you *eat or dip into your savings*, you spend part of the money you have put aside for future use. *I had to dip into my savings to have the car repaired.* | | | | | |
| **feather your nest** | To say of someone that they are*feathering their nest*means that they are taking advantage of their position in order to obtain money and enjoy have a comfortable life. | | | | | |
| **feed the kitty** | If you*feed the kitty*, you contribute to a collection of money called a 'kitty' in order to help a good cause. *Come on! Every little helps. You should feed the kitty for a good cause!* | | | | | |
| **feel the pinch** | When someone*feels the pinch*, they begin to suffer from a lack of money. *With the drop in tourism, hotels and restaurants are beginning to feel the pinch.* | | | | | |
| **gnomes of Zurich** | This is a disparaging term for Swiss bankers who control a lot of money, are said to be uninterested in the provenance of funds and protect their clients' identity. *The gnomes of Zurich refuse to cooperate with the investigating officials.* | | | | | |
| **golden handcuffs** | The term *golden handcuffs* refers to a large sum of money or a generous financial arrangement granted to an executive as an incentive to stay in their job, or to ensure long-term cooperation after their departure. | | | | | |
| **golden handshake** | A *golden handshake* is a generous sum of money given to a person when they leave a company or retire (sometimes given to encourage early retirement). | | | | | |
| **gravy train** | If someone is *on the gravy train,* they have found an easy way to make money, one that requires little effort and is without risk. *Since the village has become fashionable, he charges for every photograph taken of his house - he's on a gravy train!* | | | | | |
| **hard up** | If you are *hard up*, you have very little money. *We were so hard up that we had to sleep in the car.* | | | | | |
| **hit pay dirt** | If you *hit (or strike) pay dirt*, you are lucky and suddenly find yourself in a successful money-making situation. *Charlie finally hit pay dirt with his latent invention.* | | | | | |
| **on the house** | Something which is *on the house* is offered free of charge, usually in a bar or restaurant. *The new owner offered us a drink on the house.* | | | | | |
| **ill-gotten gains** | | | | Money, profit or benefits that are made in a dishonest or illegal manner are called*ill-gotten gains*. *He won money by cheating and is now enjoying his ill-gotten gains.* | | |
| **itching (itchy) palm** | | | | Someone who has an*itching palm*is greedy for money, for example tips or commission (as if putting money in the palm of their hand would ease the itch). *He's said to have an itching palm - he does nothing without payment!* | | |
| **keep your head above water** | | | | To keep*one's head above water* means to try to survive by staying out of debt, for example a small business. *Business has been slow, but we've managed to keep our head above water.* | | |
| **keep the wolf from the door** | | | | In order to *keep the wolf from the door,* you need to have enough money to buy food and other essentials. *My grandparents earned barely enough money to keep the wolf from the door.* | | |
| **a kickback** | | | | This expression refers to money paid illegally for favourable treatment. *The property developers were accused of giving kickbacks to the local authorities.* | | |
| **laugh all the way to the bank** | | | | A person who makes a lot of money easily, especially through someone else's stupidity, is said to *laugh all the way to the bank*. *If we fail to renew the contract, our competitors will be laughing all the way to  the bank.* | | |
| **licence to print money** | | | | An officially authorized activity which enables people to make a lot of money without much effort is called *a licence to print money.* *The contract to supply computers to schools was a licence to print money.* | | |
| **live beyond means** | | | | If someone*lives beyond their means,*they spend more money than they earn or can afford. *The cost of living was so much higher in New York that he was soon living beyond his means.* | | |
| **live on the breadline** | | | | People who *live on the breadline* have a very low income or barely enough money to survive. *Due to the recent crisis, there are more people on the breadline than ever before.* | | |
| **live in clover** | | | | Someone who*lives in clover* has enough money to lead a very comfortable life. *I dream of making an enormous amount of money and living in clover for the rest of my life!* | | |
| **live from hand to mouth** | | | | If you*live from hand to mouth*, you don't have any money to save because whatever you earn is spent on food and other essentials. *Most families in that area live from  hand to mouth.* | | |
| **live high off the hog** | | | | Someone who*lives high off the hog* has a lot of money and a very comfortable lifestyle. *Now he's wealthy and living high off the hog.* | | |
| **loan shark** | | | | A *loan shark* is a person who lends money at extremely high interest rates to people who are unable to obtain a loan from the bank. *The young immigrant was beaten because he was late paying back money to a loan shark.* | | |
| **look like a million dollars** | | | | | If you *look (or feel) like a million dollars*, you look/feel extremely good. *With a tan and a new hairstyle she looked a million dollars!* | |
| **lose your shirt** | | | | | If you*lose your shirt,* you lose all your money or possessions, especially as a result of speculation or gambling. *He lost his shirt when the bank want bankrupt.* | |
| **make ends meet** | | | | | If you find it difficult to pay for your everyday needs because you have very little money, it is hard for you to *make ends meet.* *Anne's salary is so low that she finds hard to make ends meet.* | |
| **make a killing** | | | | | If you say that someone has*made a killing*you mean that they have had great financial success. *He made a killing on the stock market.* | |
| **make a mint** | | | | | If someone *makes a mint,*they make a large amount of money. *They made a mint selling hamburgers outside the football stadium.* | |
| **made of *money*** | | | | | A person who is *made of money* is very rich and can buy whatever they want. *Hey! I can't afford that much. I'm not made of money!* | |
| **money to burn** | | | | | People who have*money to burn* have so much money that they can spend it on anything they want. *A leather jacket is no problem for Sarah. She's got money to burn!* | |
| **money burns a hole in your pocket** | | | | | To say that*money burns a hole in somebody's pocket*means that they are eager to spend it quickly or extravagantly. *As soon as she's paid she goes shopping. Money burns a hole in her pocket!* | |
| **money doesn't grow on trees** | | | | | To say that*money doesn't grow on trees*means that it is not plentiful or easily obtained. *Watch how you spend your money Alex. It doesn't grow on trees you know!* | |
| **money for jam** | | | | | A very easy way of earning money is called *money for jam.* *All you've got to do is hand out brochures.  It's money for jam!* | |
| **money for old rope** | | | | | Money earned from a task that requires very little effort is called *money for old rope.* *Getting paid for watering the garden is money for old rope!* | |
| **money laundering** | | | | | When people*launder money,* they manage to conceal the source of illegally-obtained money so that it is believed to be legitimate. *Certain countries have been accused of facilitating money laundering.* | |
| **money spinner** | | | | | If an activity is a *money spinner*, it is a very successful way of making money. *Washing cars was quite a money spinner when I was a student.* | |
| **money talks** | | | | | *Money talks* means that people with a lot of money have power and influence. *The owner is a millionaire and he's influential - money talks!* | |
| **more *money* than sense** | | | | | If you have *more money than sense*, you have a lot of money which you waste by spending it in a foolish manner. *He celebrated the birth of the baby by buying a sports car. He's got more money than sense!* | |
| **not for love or *money*** | | | | | | If you say that you cannot or will not do something *for love or money*, you mean that you will not do it under any circumstances. *I would not try bungee jumping for love or money!* |
| **put *money* where mouth is** | | | | | | If you *put your money where your mouth is,* not only do you express your interest, you give financial support to causes that you believe in. *If people are really interested in helping the underprivileged, they should put their money where their mouth is.* |
| **rake in the *money*** | | | | | | If you*rake in the money,* you make money in large quantities. *Bob's business is so successful, he's raking in the money.* |
| **rolling in *money*** | | | | | | Someone who is very wealthy or has access to great amounts of money is *rolling in money.* *Steve has no financial problems.  His parents are rolling money.* |
| **see colour of someone's *money*** | | | | | | If you want to*see the colour of somebody's money,* you want to be sure that the person in question has enough money to pay you before you accept to do something. *I want to see the colour of his money before shipping the goods.* |
| **throw *money* at** | | | | | | If you*throw money at something,* you try to solve a problem by spending money on it, without using any other methods. *The refugee problem cannot be solved just by throwing money at it.* |
| **throw good *money*after bad** | | | | | | Someone who spends additional money on something that was already considered a bad investment is said to*throw good money after bad.* *Buying a second-hand computer and then spending money to have it repaired is throwing good money after bad!* |
| **your *money's* worth** | | | | | | If you get*your money's worth,* you receive good value for the amount of money you spend. *We bought a travel pass to use the public transport system and we really got our money's worth.* |
| **nest egg** | | | | | | If you have a*nest egg,* you have a reserve of money which you put aside for future needs. *Our parents consider the money from the sale of their house as a nest egg for their old age.* |
| **out of your own pocket** | | | | | | If you pay for something *out of your own pocket*, you cover the cost with your own money. *Breakfast is included but you must pay for lunch out of your own pocket.* |
| **pay over the odds** | | | | | | If you *pay over the odds,* you pay too much or you pay more for something than it is really worth. *She's willing to pay over the odds for an original Kelly handbag to add to your collection.* |
| **paid peanuts** | | | | | | If you are*paid peanuts,* you have a very low salary. *Jenny has a very interesting job, but she's paid peanuts.* |
| **penny drops** | | | | | | When a person has difficulty understanding or realizing something, and then*the penny drops,* they finally understand. *The teasing continued for some time until the penny dropped and the boy realized it was a joke!* |
| **in for a penny, in for a pound** | | | | | | This expression means that once you start doing something, you might just as well do it wholeheartedly and not stop at half-measures. *Joe finally accepted to be on the committee, then he accepted to be the chairman. "In for a penny, in for a pound'." he said!* |
| **penny for your thoughts** | | | This phrase is used to ask someone what they are thinking about. *You look pensive.  A penny for your thoughts.* | | | |
| **turn up like a bad penny** | | | If someone*turns up like a bad penny,* they appear at a place or event where they are not welcome or not wanted. *I try to avoid Jane, but wherever I go she turns up like a bad penny!* | | | |
| **pick up the tab** | | | If you *pick up the tab*, you pay the bill or pay the cost of something. *There was a celebration lunch for the team and Bill picked up the tab.* | | | |
| **play the market** | | | If you *play the market*, you buy stocks and shares in the hope of making a profit when you sell them. *It's always tempting to play the market, but it's more risky at the present time.* | | | |
| **price oneself out of the market** | | | If you *price yourself out of the market*, you charge such a high price for your goods or services that nobody wants to buy them. *He was so eager to make money that he priced himself out of the market.* | | | |
| **rags to riches** | | | If a person *goes from rags to riches*, they start off being very poor and become very rich and successful. *By renovating old houses in the right places, he went from rags to riches.* | | | |
| **rob Peter to pay Paul** | | | If someone*robs Peter to pay Paul,* they pay one debt with money borrowed from someone else, thus creating another debt. *David borrowed from a friend to pay his overdraft, a typical case of robbing Peter to pay Paul.* | | | |
| **saddled with debt** | | | If you are *saddled with debt,* the amount of money that you owe is a financial burden. *Be careful.  If you buy a house that is too expensive, you could be saddled with debt for many years.* | | | |
| **scrimp and save** | | | If you *scrimp and save,* you spend as little as possible over a certain period of time in order to save money. *The parents scrimped and saved for years so that their children could have a college education.* | | | |
| **set you back** | | | The sum of money something*sets you back*is the amount it costs you. *Changing the heating system will set us back about $5000.* | | | |
| **on a shoestring** | | | If you do something*on a shoestring,* you do it with very little money. *When I was a student I lived on a shoestring.* | | | |
| **(put) skin in the game** | | | If you*put skin in the game*, you show your confidence in a company by making a considerable investment or a financial commitment. *I got good news today.  Apparently a serious investor is willing to put skin in the game.* | | | |
| **slice/share of the cake** | | | When people feel entitled to a share of the profits or benefits, they want a (larger) *slice of the cake*. *Since profits are higher this year, the workers feel they deserve a bigger slice of the cake.* | | | |
| **slush fund** | | | A *slush fun*d is an account or fund in politics or business where money is set aside for various unofficial purposes, often unethical or even illegal. *A large commission taken from the slush fund ensured the success of the negotiations.* | | | |
| **splash out** | | | If you *splash out on* something, you spend a lot of money on it. *Chloe's parents really splashed out on her wedding.* | | | |
| **it's a steal** | | | If you find something that you want for a very low price, much lower than what it is worth, you can say *'it's a steal!'*. *He's selling it for $20?  At that price it's a steal!* | | | |
| **sting someone** | | | If you *sting someone*for an amount of money, you make them pay for something, usually in a deceitful manner. *Not only was the lunch boring but I was stung for $25!* | | | |
| **suit every pocket** | | | This term refers to the amount of money you are able to spend or the price you can afford. *The store offers a wide range of computers at prices to suit every pocket.* | | | |
| **on one's uppers** | | | Someone who is *on their uppers* has very little money or not enough to cover their needs. *Because he was clearly on his uppers when he was hired, he was given an advance in salary.* | | | |

# *English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions*

## *Mistakes - Errors*

(Idioms :  back the wrong horse  → wide of the mark)

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| **back the wrong horse** | If you back or bet on the wrong horse, for example the loser in a contest, match or election, you support the wrong person. *When I voted for him I was convinced he would win, but I backed the wrong horse!* |
| **bark up the wrong tree** | A person who is barking up the wrong tree is doing the wrong thing, because their beliefs or ideas are incorrect or mistaken.  *The police are barking up the wrong tree if they think Joey stole the car - he can't drive!* |
| **botch up/make a botch of** | If you spoil something, or make a mess of it, by doing a job badly or incorrectly, you make a botch of it or you botch it up. *Danny tried to assemble the new desk, but he made a botch of it.* |
| **eat crow eat humble pie** | If you eat crow, you admit that you were wrong about something and apologize. *He had no option but to eat crow and admit that his analysis was wrong.* |
| **eat one's words** | If you eat your words, you have to admit that your were mistaken in what you said. *After predicting disastrous results, he had to eat his words when he saw the success of the new product.* |
| **Freudian slip** | A Freudian slip is a mistake made by a speaker which is considered to reveal their true thoughts or feelings. *So you got the job - I'm so sad ...  Sorry, I mean 'glad'!* |
| **Himalayan blunder** | If you stupidly make a serious mistake or error, you commit a Himalayan blunder. *Apparently he lost his job because of a Himalayan blunder.* |
| **overshoot the mark** | If you make a mistake as a result of misjudging something (situation, distance, amount, etc.), you overshoot the mark. *He overshot the mark by about 20%*. |
| **see the error of your ways** | When someone sees the error of their ways, they understand that what they are doing is wrong and accept to change their behaviour. *He talked to a counsellor who tried to make him see the error of his ways*. |
| **swallow one's pride** | If you swallow your pride, you accept something humiliating or embarrassing, for example having to admit that you are wrong, or that you have less knowledge that you thought. *When Jill failed the exam, she had to swallow her pride and repeat the course.* |
| **swallow your words** | If you swallow your words, you admit that you were wrong. *He said I'd never get the job, but he had to swallow his words when I was appointed.* |
| **trial and error** | Attempting to achieve a satisfactory result by testing and eliminating various methods until the best one is found is called trial and error. *Some of the best cooks learn by trial and error.* |
| **wide of the mark** | If something is (or falls) wide of the mark, it is incorrect or inadequate, or it is not what was expected. *The price offered was wide of the mark; it was sold for ten times more!* |

# *English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions*

## *Memory*

(Idioms :   bear in mind   →  slipped my mind)

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| --- | --- |
| **bear in mind** | If a person asks you to bear something in mind, they are asking you to remember it because it is important. *You must bear in mind that the cost of living is higher in New York.* |
| **brain/memory like a sieve** | Someone who has a brain like a sieve has a very bad memory and forgets things easily. *Oh, I forgot to buy the bread - I've got a brain like a sieve these days!* |
| **have down pat** | If you memorise or practise something until you know it perfectly or have it exactly right, you have it down pat. I rehearsed my presentation until I had it down pat. |
| **have on the brain** | If you have something on the brain, you think or talk abut it all constantly. *Stop talking about golf. You've got golf on the brain!* |
| **in one ear and out the other** | To say that information goes in one ear and comes out the othermeans that it is immediately forgotten or ignored. *I keep telling him  about the risks but it goes in one ear and out the other.  He never listens!* |
| **jog someone's memory** | When you help someone to remember something they have forgotten, you jog their memory. *You don't remember who was with us that day? Here's a photograph to jog your memory.* |
| **lose your train of thought** | If you forget what you were saying, for example after a disturbance or interruption, you lose your train of thought. *Now where was I? I'm afraid I've lost my train of thought.* |
| **if memory serves well** | If your memory serves you well, you remember correctly or you have not forgotten any details. *You're Stella's daughter, if my memory serves me well.* |
| **trip down memory lane** | If you take a trip (stroll or walk) down memory lane, you remember pleasant things that happened in the past. *Every Christmas is a trip down memory for the family when our parents take out the photograph albums.* |
| **in your mind's eye** | If you can visualise something, or see an image of it in your mind, you see it in your mind's eye. *I can see the village in my mind's eye but I can't remember the name.* |
| **rake over the ashes** | When people rake over the ashes, they discuss an unpleasant event which took place in the past. *My grandfather's business went bankrupt years go, but he still rakes over the ashes from time to time.* |
| **refresh someone's memory** | If you refresh someone's memory, you remind them of facts they seem to have forgotten. *Let me refresh your memory - you've already missed three classes this term.* |
| **ring a bell** | If something rings a bell, it sounds familiar, but you don't remember the exact details. *John Bentley? The name rings a bell but I don't remember him.* |
| **senior moment** | A momentary lapse of memory, especially in older people, or an absent-minded action such as putting the cereals in the refrigerator, is humorously referred to as having a senior moment.  *I found the phone in the cupboard. I must have had a senior moment!* |
| **it slipped my mind** | If something has slipped your mind, you have forgotten about it. *Oh dear! It slipped my mind that the shops were closed today!* |

# *English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions*

## *Madness - Insanity*

( Idioms : away with the fairies  →  take leave of senses )

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| **away with the fairies** | Someone who is away with the fairies is in such a dreamy state that they are not totally in touch with reality and give the impression of being slightly mad. *It's no use trying to explain the problem to her - she's away with the fairies!* |
| **go bananas** | If someone becomes very emotional and starts behaving in a crazy way, they go bananas. *If you announce that you are going to drop out of school, your parents will go bananas!* |
| **basket case** | A person whose agitated mental state leaves them helpless or unable to cope with things is called a basket case.  *Jenny will turn into a basket case if this stressful situation continues.* |
| **bats in the belfry** | If you say that somebody has bats in the belfry, you mean that  they are eccentric or crazy. *He comes up with the craziest ideas - he must have bats in the belfry!* |
| **have you gone out of your mind?** | If you ask someone if they have gone out of their mind, you think they are crazy, foolish or insane. *You're going to ask for a 100% increase in salary? Have you gone out of your mind?* |
| **harebrained idea** | A harebrained idea is an idea or suggestion that is considered to be silly, foolish or totally impractical. *We'll never make any progress if you have nothing but harebrained ideas to offer!* |
| **the lights are on, but no one is home** | This is a humorous way of referring to someone who is lacking intelligence or sanity, or to someone who is simply preoccupied and not paying attention. *Forget about Andy today - the lights are on but no one is home!* |
| **lose one's marbles** | If someone loses their marbles, they become mentally confused, or no longer behave sensibly or rationally. *The old man is acting very strangely. He seems to have lost his marbles.* |
| **not all there** | Someone who is not all there behaves strangely at times, or seems a bit odd. *Our new neighbour wears a hat and coat even in summer; he's not all there*! |
| **not in one's right mind** | Someone who is not in their right mind is not behaving in a logical or sensible way. *Julie wasn't in her right mind the day she bought that outfit.  It doesn't suit her at all!* |
| **not playing with a full deck (of cards)** | Someone who is not playing with a full deck (of cards) lacks intelligence or does not have full mental abilities. *Old Mrs.Whitehead was not playing with a full deck when she bought that fancy lawnmower!* |
| **go nuts** | To say that a person has gone nuts means that they have become completely foolish, eccentric or mad. *I think the old lady has gone nuts!  It's very hot today and she's wearing a fur coat!* |
| **nutty as a fruitcake** | Someone who is (as) nutty as a fruitcake is insane or crazy. *Don't pay attention to what the old man says; he's as nutty as a fruitcake!* |
| **off your rocker!** | If you tell someone that they are off their rocker, you think they are completely crazy. *You're going to give all your money away?  You're off your rocker!* |
| **rats in the attic** | If you say that someone has rats in the attic, you mean that they are a bit mad or that their behaviour is eccentric. *She keeps repeating the same question.  I think she's got rats in the attic.* |
| **a screw loose** | If someone has a screw loose, their behaviour is strange and they appear slightly mad. *She wears a fur coat in the summer - she must have a screw loose!* |
| **stark raving mad** | To say that someone is stark raving mad means that they are completely crazy. *You're stark raving mad to go sailing in this weather.* |
| **stir crazy** | If a person goes stir-crazy, they become very agitated or nervous because they have been confined to a place for too long. *After several days in quarantine, people were going stir-crazy.* |
| **take leave of one's senses** | To say to someone 'have you taken leave of your senses?' means that you think their behaviour is crazy. *You're going skiing in this blizzard? Have you taken leave of your senses?* |

# *English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions*

## *Luck  -  Chance  -  Opportunity*

(Idioms page 1 :  fall into one's lap  →  play waiting game)

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| **fall into one's lap** | If something good falls into your lap, it happens to you without any effort on your part. *She's not making much effort to find work.  Does she think a job is going to fall into her lap?* |
| **fat chance!** | The expression fat chance is used to indicate that something is not very likely to happen. *The boss is thinking of me for the job?  Fat chance!* |
| **free ride** | Someone who gets a free ride benefits from a collective activity without participating in it. *Only those who share the work can share the benefits - nobody gets a free ride!* |
| **get a second bite at the cherry** | This expression means that you get a second opportunity to do or try something. *He was eliminated in the semi-finals, but he'll get a second bite at the cherry next year.* |
| **off-chance** | If you do something on the off chance, you think there might be a slight possibility of success. *I went into the supermarket on the off chance that I would find a map.* |
| **anyone's call** | This expression is used when the result of a contest or election is difficult to predict. *"Who do you think will win?" "It's anyone's call."* |
| **jump on bandwagon** | If a person or organisation jumps on the bandwagon, they decide to seize the opportunity and do something when it is already successful or fashionable. *When organic food became popular, certain stores were quick to jump on the bandwagon and promote it.* |
| **luck of the draw** | To refer to something that happens as the luck of the draw means that it is the result of pure chance, with no possibility of choice. *The samples distributed varied in size and value; it was the luck of the draw.* |
| **pot luck** | If you take pot luck, you accept whatever is available without knowing what it will be like. *We were so hungry we decided to take pot luck and stopped at the first restaurant we saw.* |
| **make hay while the sun shines** | This expression is used as an encouragement to take advantage of a good situation which may not last. *Successful athletes are advised to make hay while the sun shines*. |
| **more by accident than by design** | Something which happens more by accident than (by) design is  done without deliberate intention. *I became an interpreter more by accident than design; nobody else could speak the language of the refugees.* |
| **murphy's law** | Referring to Murphy's law expresses a sentiment of bad luck and the idea that if anything can go wrong, it will. *We've tried to prepare for every possible incident, but remember Murphy's law ...!* |
| **play a waiting game** | If you play a waiting game, you deliberately delay taking action in order to be able to act more effectively later. *The cat keeps its eye on the bird, carefully playing a waiting game.* |

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| **push one's luck** | If you *push your luck,* you try to get more than what you have already obtained and risk spoiling the situation. *You've got your father's permission to go to the concert.  Don't push your luck by trying to borrow his car.* |
| **that ship has sailed** | The expression *'that ship has sailed'* means that a particular opportunity has passed by and now it's too late. '*Is the offer still open?'  'Sorry, that ship has sailed - you missed your chance!'* |
| **sitting pretty** | Someone who is *sitting pretty* is in a good or fortunate situation, especially compared to others who are not so lucky. *He sold his shares at a good time so he's now sitting pretty and enjoying life.* |
| **strike gold** | If you *strike gold,* you find exactly what you need : satisfaction, wealth, happiness, etc. *I think she struck gold this time in her new job.  It suits her perfectly.* |
| **strike while the iron is hot** | If you *strike while the iron is hot,* you act immediately because now is the ideal time to do it. *The price of property has dropped.  It's a good time to buy.  You should strike while the iron is hot.* |
| **strike (it) lucky** | When someone*strikes it lucky*, they run into good luck. *We had a sunny week in Scotland - we struck it lucky!* |
| **tomorrow's another day** | This expression means that even if everything is not satisfactory at present, there will be opportunity for things to improve. *For the moment you need some rest;  tomorrow's another day.* |
| **touch wood/knock on wood** | This humorous expression, based on superstition, is used to avoid bad luck, often while touching something made of wood. *The order will be confirmed shortly - touch wood!* |
| **vested interest** | If you have a*vested interested* in a situation or event, you expect to benefit or gain an advantage from it. *Tony has a vested interest in Fred's promotion; he hopes to get his job!* |
| **waiting in the wings** | If someone is *waiting in the wings,* they are waiting for an opportunity to take action, especially to replace someone else in their job or position. *There are many young actors waiting in the wings ready to show their talent.* |
| **while the going is good** | If you take action *while the going is good*, you do something before the situation changes and it is no longer possible. *There's a 50% discount on subscriptions this month.  I think I'll subscribe while the going is good.* |

# *English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions*

## *Lifestyle - Way of life*

(Idioms page 1 :  champagne on a beer budget  →  the life of Riley)

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| **champagne on a beer budget** | Someone who likes expensive things that they cannot afford haschampagne taste on a beer budget. *Eve borrows money to buy expensive designer clothes - champagne taste on a beer budget!* | |
| **cheek by jowl** | When people are cheek by jowl, they are crammed uncomfortably close together. *The refugees are living cheek by jowl in a temporary camp.* | |
| **keep up appearances** | A person who keeps up appearances maintains an outward show of prosperity or well-being in order to hide their difficulties from others. *He continued to keep up appearances even when business was bad.* | |
| **keep up with Joneses** | Someone who tries to keep up with the Joneses tries to have the same possessions or social achievements as someone else. *First the Browns moved their children to an expensive school.  Now the Smiths have done the same.  It's silly how some people feel they have to keep up with the Joneses!* | |
| **keep wolf from door** | In order to keep the wolf from the door, you need to have enough money to buy food and other essentials. *My grandparents earned barely enough money to keep the wolf from the door.* | |
| **live beyond means** | If someone lives beyond their means, they spend more money than they earn or can afford. *The cost of living was so much higher in New York that he was soon living beyond his means.* | |
| **live from hand to mouth** | If you live from hand to mouth, you don't have any money to save because whatever you earn is spent on food and other essentials. *Most families in that area live from  hand to mouth.* | |
| **live high off the hog** | Someone who lives high off the hog has a lot of money and a very comfortable lifestyle. *Now he's wealthy and living high off the hog.* | |
| **live in clover** | Someone who lives in clover has enough money to lead a very comfortable  life. *I dream of making an enormous amount of money and living in clover for the rest of my life!* | |
| **live in an ivory tower** | A person who lives in an ivory tower has a lifestyle that preserves them from the problems and difficulties experienced by others. *You're completely out of touch - it's time to come out of your ivory tower and see what's going on!* | |
| **live on the breadline** | People who live on the breadline have a very low income or barely enough money to survive. *Due to the recent crisis, there are more people on the breadline than ever before.* | |
| **live on the edge** | If you live on the edge, your lifestyle involves dangerous or risky activities.  *Extreme sportsmen or gamblers are examples of people who live on the edge.* | |
| **live out of suitcase** | Someone who lives of a suitcase travels a lot, moving from place to place, and is therefore restricted to the contents of their suitcase. *Sarah's job involves so much travelling that she lives out of a suitcase.* | |
| **live the life of riley** | A person who lives the life of Riley has a comfortable and enjoyable life, without having to make much effort. *He married a millionaire, and since then he's been living the life of Riley!* | |
| **make the best of things** | | If you*make the best of things,*you accept the situation and do what  you can in spite of the difficulties or disadvantages. *The apartment was badly located, but the rent was low, so they decided to make the best of things.* |
| **make ends meet** | | If you find it difficult to pay for your everyday needs because you have very little money, it is hard for you to *make ends meet.* *Anne's salary is so low that she finds hard to make ends meet.* |
| **make exhibition of** | | When someone behaves in such a foolish way in public that they look ridiculous, they *make an exhibition of themselves.* *Get down off the table Fred!  You're making an exhibition of yourself!* |
| **new lease of life** | | A person who has a*new lease of life*has a chance to live longer or have a better lifestyle with greater enjoyment. *Moving closer to his children has given him a new lease of life.* |
| **school of hard knocks** | | Someone who goes through*the school of hard knocks* learns through the positive and negative experiences of life rather than through a formal classroom education. *He never went to college but the school of hard knocks made him a shrewd businessman.* |
| **seamy side of life** | | This expression refers to the most unpleasant, disreputable or sordid aspects of life that we normally do not see (just as the stitched seams of clothes are generally not seen). *Social workers really see the seamy side of life.* |
| **on one's uppers** | | Someone who is *on their uppers* has very little money or not enough to cover their needs. *Because he was clearly on his uppers when he was hired, he was given an advance in salary.* |
| **weal and woe** | | This expression refers to the good and bad times, the joys and sorrows, or prosperity and misfortune. *We all get our share of weal and woe in life.* |

*English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions*

***Law & Order***

(Idioms page 1 :  above board  → case in point )

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| **above board** | If a situation or business is described as*above board*, it is open, honest and legal. *There are not secret negotiations.  Our dealings have always been above board.* |
| **accomplished fact (fait accompli)** | Something that has been done or completed, before those affected by it can intervene or change it, is called an *accomplished fact.* |
| **ambulance chaser** | A lawyer who finds work by persuading people injured in accidents to claim money from the person who caused the accident is called an*'ambulance chaser'.* *Peterson and Scott are well-known ambulance chasers - that's how they make their money!* |
| **arm of the law** | This expression refers to the extent to which the authority or power of the law extends. *He fled to South America hoping to escape the arm of the law.* |
| **bandit territory** | A geographical area where law enforcement is practically impossible, because people ignore all rules, is called '*bandit territory*'. *There are a certain number of bandit territories in the world where travellers are advised not to go.* |
| **behind bars** | Someone who is*behind bars* is in prison. *If you hang around with that gang, you'll find yourself behind bars in no time!* |
| **beyond reasonable doubt** | This is a legal expression which means that something is certain. *The court established, beyond any reasonable doubt, that the man was innocent*. |
| **in black and white** | To say that something is*in black and white* means that there is written proof of it. *It's an obligation.  It's in black and white in your contract.* |
| **blow the whistle** | If you report an illegal or socially-harmful activity to the authorities, and give information about those responsible for it, you *blow the whistle* or you are a *whistle-blower. He refused to blow the whistle on his boss for fear of losing his job.* |
| **breaking and entering** | This term refers to the fact of entering a building or home illegally by breaking open a window, door, etc. *The two men were found guilty of breaking and entering.* |
| **brush with the law** | When you *have a brush with*something, such as the law, you encounter or experience it briefly. *Had a brush with the law for speeding a few years ago, but he has had a clean record ever since.* |
| **burden of proof** | The *burden of proof*is the necessity imposed by the law to prove that what one says is true. *The burden of proof lies with the claimant.* |
| **case in point** | This term refers to an example which serves to illustrate, support or prove a point which is currently under discussion. *Not even the most talented athlete is guaranteed a long career.  The latest skiing accident is a case in point.* |

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| **caught red-handed** | If a person is*caught red-handed*, they are caught while they are doing something wrong or illegal. *The police arrived as the burglar was leaving the house.  He was caught red-handed.* |
| **caveat emptor** | This Latin expression, which means 'let the buyer beware', is a warning to customers that goods are for sale 'as is'. The buyer is purchasing the articles at his/her own risk and is responsible for examining them beforehand. *Caveat emptor is a principle to be remembered when buying second-hand goods.* |
| **crack down on** | If the authorities *crack down on something*, they enforce the law by taking severe measures to restrict undesirable or criminal actions. *To reduce road accidents, it was decided to crack down on speeding.* |
| **cut some slack** | If you relax a rule, treat a person less severely or allow someone to do something which is normally not permitted, you *cut them some slack.* *Our parents are very strict; I wish they'd cut us some slack now and then.* |
| **daylight robbery** | The term *daylight robbery* is used when the price of something is thought to be much too high. *$10 for an orange juice? That's daylight robbery!* |
| **fair hearing** | When accused of wrongdoing, if someone gets a *fair hearing*, they get an opportunity to present evidence or give their side of the story, usually in court. *I can guarantee that you will get a fair hearing.* |
| **false pretences** | If you obtain something *under false pretences*, you deceive others by lying about your identity, qualifications, financial or social position, in order to get what you want. *The journalist obtained the interview under false pretences.* |
| **(can't) fight the city hall** | This expression means that it is useless to try to win a battle against a politician, establishment or bureaucracy in general. *Brian decided it was a waste of energy trying to obtain a tax refund - you can't fight the city hall.* |
| **get out of hand** | If a person or situation*gets out of hand,* they cannot be controlled any longer. *During the student demonstration, things got out of hand and several shop windows were broken.* |
| **hit and run (accident)** | When the driver of a vehicle hits another vehicle without stopping to provide help, identification or insurance, and fails to report the accident to the police, the collision is called a *hit-and-run accident. A hit-and-run accident deserves serious punishment.* |
| **identity theft** | The crime of using another person's personal information (name, credit card number, etc.) without his/her knowledge, to set up and use bank accounts and credit facilities is known as*identity theft.* |
| **in trouble with the law** | If someone is*in trouble with the law,* they are being questioned by the police in connection with something illegal or criminal. *The suspect has often been in trouble with the law.* |
| **kangaroo court** | A *kangaroo court* is an illegal tribunal set up by a group of people who have taken the law into their own hands and conduct trials which deny fundamental justice. *Calm down please!  Is this a meeting or a kangaroo court?* |

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| **lay down the law** | Someone who*lays down the law* tells people very forcefully and firmly what to do. *The volunteers helped in a disorganised way.  They needed someone to lay down the law.* |
| **law of the jungle** | A situation in which people are prepared to use unscrupulous methods in order to succeed or survive is called the*law of the jungle.* *Some businesses today seem to be governed by the law of the jungle.* |
| **law unto themselves** | If someone is*a law unto themselves*, they do things their own way and ignore what is generally considered as acceptable. *They're against discipline and allow their children complete freedom - they're a law unto themselves.* |
| **licence to print money** | An officially authorized activity which enables people to make a lot of money without much effort is called *a licence to print money.* *The contract to supply computers to schools was a licence to print money.* |
| **murphy's law** | Referring to *Murphy's law* expresses a sentiment of bad luck and the idea that if anything can go wrong, it will. *We've tried to prepare for every possible incident, but remember Murphy's law ...!* |
| **not have a leg to stand on** | To say that someone *doesn't have a leg to stand* on means that they can't prove what they say. *Three people testified against him.  He didn't have a leg to stand on.* |
| **null and void** | Something which is *null and void* has no legal force or is invalid. *The contract was declared null and void.* |
| **open-and-shut case** | An *open-and-shut case* is one where the facts are so clear that the matter can be dealt with or solved easily. *He was caught driving the stolen car.  It's an open-and-shut case.* |
| **paper trail** | If a person or organisation leaves a*paper trail,* they leave evidence in writing or in document form that will serve as proof of their actions. *The police found a paper trail which lead to the author of the hoax.* |
| **partner in crime** | A person who helps you to plan something dishonest or unlawful is called your *partner in crime*. (This expression can be used jokingly as in the example  below.) *Sam was my partner in crime.  He hid my son's bicycle until his birthday.* |
| **pervert the course of justice** | If a person *perverts the course of justice,* they tell a lie or prevent the police from finding out the truth about something. *The suspect was accused of trying to pervert the course of justice.* |
| **poetic justice** | *Poetic justice* is an ideal form of justice in which virtue is rewarded and evil punished, often in a particularly appropriate manner, by an ironic twist of fate. *It is poetic justice that the country responsible for the ecological disaster should suffer most from its effects.* |
| **put one's house in order** | If you tell someone to*put their house in order*, you are saying that they should organise their own affairs or take care of their own problems before giving advice to other people. *You should put your house in order before telling me what to do!* |
| **rough justice** | Treatment or justice that does not seem fair, or is too severe, is called 'rough justice', especially if it is not legal. *The way the player was treated by the media was very rough justice!* |
| **sharp practice** | Trying to achieve something by using underhand, deceitful or dishonourable means, that are barely within the law, is called *sharp practice.*  *That company is under investigation for sharp practice so it's better to avoid dealing with them.* |
| **signed, sealed and delivered** | When an agreement, contract or treaty is *signed, sealed and delivered*, all the legal documents are in order. *It is hoped that the agreement will be signed, sealed and delivered before the end of the week* |
| **smoking gun** | A *smoking gun* is a piece of evidence or the indisputable sign of someone's guilt. *The fingerprints left on the door-handle was the smoking gun that enabled the police to arrest him.* |
| **take the law into one's own hands** | If, instead of calling the police, you act personally against someone who has done something wrong, you*take the law into your own hands.* *Instead of calling the police, he took the law into his own hands and confronted the youth who had stolen his son's scooter.* |
| **toe the line** | If someone *toes the line*, they obey the rules and accept the principles laid down by a person, group or organisation. *If you want to stay in this school, you'll have to learn to toe the line.* |

*English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions*

***Intelligence - Understanding***

(Idioms page 1 :  on the ball  →  come to your senses )

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| **be on the ball** | If you are *on the ball*, you are aware of what is happening and are able to deal with things quickly and intelligently. *We need someone who is really on the ball to head the fund-raising campaign.* |
| **beat one's brains out** | If someone *beats their brains out*, they try very hard to understand something or solve a problem.  *My grandmother beats her brains out every evening trying to do the crossword puzzle in the newspaper.* |
| **it beats me!** | This expression is used to express surprise at something that you find difficult to understand. *It beats me how he can live in that horrible apartment!* |
| **it's beyond me** | To say 'it's beyond me' means that it is impossible for you to understand. *It's beyond me why Mary wants to marry John.* |
| **blind you with science** | If someone tries to *blind you with science*, they confuse you with their knowledge by using difficult or technical words. *When you ask Tim for a simple explanation, he blinds you with science.* |
| **I wasn't born yesterday** | This expression is used to indicate that you are not as foolish or as easily deceived as some people seem to think. *Stop inventing silly excuses.  I wasn't born yesterday you know!* |
| **brains behind something** | Someone who is*the brains behind* a project or action is the person thought to have planned and organised everything. *The police have arrested a man believed to be the brains behind the bank robbery.* |
| **can't make head or tail of** | If you *can't make head or tail of* something, you can't understand it at all. *Amy's message was so confusing.  I couldn't make head or tail of it!* |
| **put on your thinking cap** | If you tell someone to *put their thinking cap*on, you ask them to find an idea or solve a problem by thinking about it. *Now here's this week's quiz;  it's time to put your thinking caps on!* |
| **chinese arithmetic** | If something is very complicated or difficult to understand, it is said to be like*Chinese arithmetic.* *When he tried to explain the rules of the game to me, it was like Chinese arithmetic!* |
| **not have a clue** | If you*don't have a clue* about something, you don't know anything about it. *My wife's grandmother's maiden name? I don't have a clue!* |
| **collect one's thoughts** | If you *collect your thoughts*, you try to think calmly and clearly in order to prepare yourself mentally for something. *Anne stopped to collect her thoughts before calling back the customer.* |
| **come to grips with** | If you *come to grips* with a problem or situation, you start to understand or deal with it properly. *After the initial shock, the patient began to come to grips with his disability.* |
| **come to your senses** | If you *come to your senses* you start to think clearly and behave sensibly. *She finally came to her senses and realized that public transport was faster than driving in the city.* |

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| **common knowledge** | When information is well-known to everyone (particularly in a community or group), it is called *common knowledge.* *You didn't know the intern was Jack's son? It thought it was common knowledge.* |
| **credibility gap** | The extent of disbelief, of the difference between what you are asked to believe and what you are able to believe, is call a *credibility gap.* *The growing credibility gap may lead to a serious loss of votes in the next elections.* |
| **at cross purposes** | If two people are *at cross purposes*, there is a misunderstanding as to what each one is talking about. *Look, we seem to be at cross purposes. You're talking about 'sailing' boats, but I'm talking about 'selling' boats.* |
| **crystal clear** | A statement or expression that is easy to understand or has an obvious meaning is*crystal clear* or as*clear as crystal.* *There was no need to repeat the instructions.  They were crystal clear.* |
| **dumbing down** | If something, such as a television programme or a film production, is *dumbed down,* it is deliberately made less intelligent or less demanding in order to attract a larger audience. *Some TV channels are dumbing down their programmes in an attempt to increase their audience ratings.* |
| **enough said** | This expression is used to indicate that you completely understand the situation and you do not need any further details. *Your mother-in-law arrived unexpectedly last night?  Enough said!* |
| **eyes (wide) open** | If you do something *with your eyes open*, you are fully aware of what you are doing. *I took on the job with my eyes wide open so I'm not complaining*. |
| **facts speak for themselves** | When the facts of a situation are co clear that no further explanation or extra details are necessary, the*facts speak for themselves.* *No need to tell you that the situation is disastrous.  The facts speak for themselves.* |
| **get someone's drift** | If you *get someone's drift*, you understand in a general way what they are trying to say. *I didn't understand every word but I got the drift.* |
| **get the message** | If you *get the message*, you understand what someone is trying to tell you, even if it is expressed in actions or gestures rather than words. *When Tony pointed to his watch, I got the message - it was time to leave for the airport.* |
| **get the picture** | A person who *gets the picture* understands what is being explained or described. *The alarm went off and people started running everywhere - you get the picture I'm sure!* |
| **get wise to** | If you *get wise to something*, you learn something that you were not aware of before. *He finally got wise to the fact that children were stealing apples from his garden.* |
| **hammer something home** | If you *hammer home* a point or an argument, you repeat it often to make sure that it is fully understood. *The police hammered home the dangers of drinking and driving.* |

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| **hit the nail on the head** | When you *hit the nail on the head,* you are absolutely right about something or have guessed the exact nature of a problem or situation. *You hit the nail on the head when you said Mark had money problems.  He's lost his job.* |
| **horse sense** | Someone who has *horse sense* is a practical thinker who has the ability to make sensible decisions. *Don't worry. Andrew has good horse sense. He'll do the right thing.* |
| **ignorance is bliss** | This means that if you don't know about a problem or unpleasant fact, you won't worry about it. *I didn't know our neighbour was an escaped prisoner until the police arrrived - ignorance is bliss!* |
| **jump to conclusions** | A person who *jumps to conclusions* reaches a decision or makes a judgement too fast, before taking the time to check out all the facts. *We haven't got the full story yet so let's not jump to conclusions.* |
| **know which side your bread is buttered** | If you know *which side your bread is buttered*, you know where your interests lie or what will be to your advantage. *Jack never argues with his father-in-law.  He knows which side his bread is buttered.* |
| **learning curve** | The length of time needed to learn something new is called the*learning curve.* *The new system has a long learning curve so we'll have to give the staff time to get used to it.* |
| **light bulb moment** | A*light bulb moment* is when you have a sudden moment of inspiration, comprehension or realization. *Harry had a light-bulb moment when he finally realized what was blocking the mechanism.* |
| **see in a new *light*** | If you*see something in a new light,* you view it in a way that makes you change the opinion you had before. *After listening to my colleague, I began to see things in a new light.* |
| **lost the plot** | If a situation becomes so confusing that you are unable to understand what is happening or what you are supposed to do, you*lose the plot.* *His instructions were so long and confusing that I just lost the plot!* |
| **lost the thread** | If you*lose the thread*of a conversation or story, you are unable to follow it. *There were so many interruptions during the film that I completely lost the thread.* |
| **lost ball in high weeds** | Someone who is totally confused, and doesn't know what they are doing or how to do it, is *a lost ball in high weeds.* *The new intern in a lost ball in high weeds - he has no idea now to begin the task he's been given.* |
| **make sense of** | If you *make sense of*something, you understand it or find the meaning. *I couldn't make sense of the instructions.* |
| **miss the point** | If you *miss the point* you fail to understand the essential part of what has been said. *Sam missed the point.  It's not the job that's the problem, it's the amount of work it involves for one person.* |
| **not miss a trick** | If a person never misses a trick, they are very alert and aware of everything that is happening around them. The old lady next door will know if Bill is there or not - she never misses a trick! |
| **not playing with a full deck (of cards)** | Someone who is not playing with a full deck (of cards) lacks intelligence or does not have full mental abilities. Old Mrs.Whitehead was not playing with a full deck when she bought that fancy lawnmower! |
| **not the brightest bulb in the box  not the sharpest knife in the drawer  not the sharpest tool in the shed** | ‘Sharp’ and ‘bright’ both mean ‘clever’ or ‘intelligent’.  These are a few of the expressions used to say that someone is not very intelligent. There are many others.  Max has failed the exam for the third time!  He's obviously not the brightest bulb in the box!  Nobody was surprised when Johnny misunderstood the message. We all know he’s not the sharpest knife in the drawer! |
| **muddy the waters** | If you muddy the waters, you make something less clear by giving confusing information. I had difficulty understanding, and Alan's explanation just muddied the waters! |
| **no-brainer** | A decision or choice that requires little or no thought, because the best option is so obvious, is called a no-brainer. The choice was between a cash refund or having the amount credited to my account - it was a no-brainer.  I took the cash! |
| **out of your depth** | If you are out of your depth, you are unable to understand a subject or deal with a situation because it is too difficult for you. The level of the class was too high for me, so very quickly I felt out of my depth. |
| **out to lunch** | To say that someone is out to lunch means that they seem to be either unaware of what's going on around them, or unable to understand what is happening. He's hopeless as a leader - considererd as 'out to lunch' by the group. |
| **penny drops** | When a person has difficulty understanding or realizing something, and then the penny drops, they finally understand. The teasing continued for some time until the penny dropped and the boy realized it was a joke! |
| **put two and two together** | A person who can put two and two together is capable of reaching the right conclusion based on the information they have. Forget your explanation.  She won't believe you.  She can put two and two together! |
| **quick off the mark** | If someone is quick off the mark, they are quick to react to an event or take advantage of an opportunity. You've got to be quick off the mark when stores announce special offers. |
| **quick/slow on the uptake** | Someone who is quick or slow on the uptake is quick or slow to understand what is meant. Please explain the problem in simple words - I'm a bit slow on the uptake! |
| **rocket science** | If you say 'it's not rocket science' or 'no need to be a rocket scientist', you are emphasizing that something presents no major difficulty. Bob will explain how it works.  Don't worry - it's not rocket science! |
| **sharp cookie** | Someone who is not easily fooled or deceived is a sharp cookie. You can't fool my grandmother.  She's a sharp cookie! |
| **sharp as a tack** | A person who is as sharp as a tack is able to think quickly and learn very fast. You won't have to explain it to him twice.  He's as sharp as a tack. |

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| **shed light** | If you *shed light* on something, you help to explain it or make it easier to understand. *It was hoped that the testimony of the witnesses would shed light on the causes of the accident.* |
| **smart alec** | A*smart alec* is an annoying self-assertive person who tries to show off how clever they are. *Some smart alec interrupted the game claiming that the answers were incorrect!* |
| **street smart** | A person who is *street-smart* or*streetwise* has enough experience and knowledge about life in the city to be able to deal with difficult or dangerous situations. *The kids living in this area are all street-smart - they're in less danger than us.* |
| **strike home** | When somebody's comments or remarks *strike home,* they make you fully understand the situation. *The seriousness of his injuries struck home as he listened to the surgeon.* |
| **suss out** | If you*suss out something,*such as a problem or a situation, you examine it and manage to understand it. *Ask Jack to explain - he's got it all sussed out!* |
| **tech savvy** | People who are*tech savvy* have sufficient technical knowledge and skills to be comfortable using computers and other electronic devices. *Many students are more tech-savvy than their teachers.* |
| **there is one born every minute!** | This expression means that there are many people in the world who are stupid or easily fooled. *He really believed the boy found the money on the street? There's one born every minute!* |
| **tie yourself up in knots** | If you*tie yourself up in knots*, you become totally confused or confuse others when trying to explain something. *Sandy tied herself up in knots trying to explain the rules of the game*. |
| **tunnel vision** | If a person has*tunnel vision,* they focus on only one aspect of something, or they are unable to see more than one way of doing things. *Our manager has tunnel vision.  He sees no reason to change anything.* |
| **use one's noodle** | If you*use your noodle,* you use your brain or your common sense. *How did I figure that out?  I just used my noodle!* |
| **walking encyclopaedia** | This term refers to a person who is very knowledgeable about a lot of subjects. *The origin of Halloween?  Ask Jill - she's a walking encyclopaedia!* |
| **weigh your words** | If you *weigh your words,*you choose your words carefully in order to express exactly what you mean and avoid any misunderstanding. *At the press conference he spoke very clearly, weighing his words.* |
| **get wires crossed** | If people *get their wires crossed,* they misunderstand each other or are confused about what was said. *We must have got our wires crossed. I thought we were to meet at the hotel.* |
| **wise after the event** | When someone realizes, after something has happened, what could have been done to prevent it from happening, they are*wise after the event.* *In retrospect, I suppose I should have realized the boy was in difficulty and offered to help, but it's easy to be wise after the event.* |
| **wise for one's years wise beyond your years** | Someone who is *wise for their years* or *wise beyond their years* has more knowledge and experience that most people at their age. *She's still a child but she's wise beyond her years.* |
| **wise up/get wise to** | If you *wise up*or *get wise to* something, you become fully aware of  the facts and are no longer fooled. *When Mike finally wised up to the methods being used, he resigned from the company.* |
| **none the wiser** | If you do not know more about something after hearing or reading an explanation, or if you fail to find information on the subject, you are*none the wiser. I tried to understand the voting system but I was none the wiser after reading the explanation.* |
| **wrap your brain around** | If you concentrate on something in an effort to understand, you *wrap your brain around it.* *I need a translation of this report urgently, so wrap your brain around it fast!* |

*English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions*

***House, furniture and fittings***

(Idioms page 1 :  armchair critic →  rob the cradle)

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| **armchair critic** | An *armchair criti*c is someone who gives advice based on theory rather than practice. *That guy is such an armchair critic - no experience but plenty of advice.* |
| **armchair traveller** | Someone who reads books or watches TV programmes about other places and countries, but doesn't actually travel anywhere, is called an*armchair traveller*.  *A surprising number of adventure books are bought by armchair travellers.* |
| **basket case** | A person whose agitated mental state leaves them helpless or unable to cope with things is called a*basket case*.  *Jenny will turn into a basket case if this stressful situation continues.* |
| **wet blanket** | To refer to someone as a*wet blanket* means that they spoil other people's fun, or make an event less enjoyable than it could have been. *Come on Mike!  Don't be such a wet blanket. You're spoiling the party!* |
| **you can't put new wine in old bottles** | This expression means that you should not try to combine new concepts or innovations with an old or  long-established framework or system. *You'll never get that program to work on your father's old computer - you can't put new wine into old bottles.* |
| **not the brightest bulb in the box** | ‘Bright’ means ‘clever’ or ‘intelligent’.  This expression is used to say that someone is not very intelligent. *Max has failed the exam for the third time!  He's obviously not the brightest bulb in the box!* |
| **burn the candle at both ends** | If you *burn the candle at both ends*, you exhaust yourself by doing too much, especially going to bed late and getting up early. *Scott looks exhausted - I'll bet he's been burning the candle at both ends lately.* |
| **can't hold a candle to** | If one person *can't hold a candle* to another, they are much less competent or do not perform as well as the other. *John is very intelligent but he can't hold a candle to his brother Paul when it comes to sports.* |
| **red carpet** | To *roll out the red carpet*means to give special treatment to an important or honoured visitor. *The management is going to roll out the red carpet for the visit of the Nobel prize winner.* |
| **glass ceiling** | This term refers to a discriminatory barrier perceived by women and minorities that prevents them from rising to positions of power or responsibility. *Claire knew she would never break the glass ceiling and rise to a senior management position*. |
| **clock in/out** | When you*clock in*or *out*, you record the time you arrive or leave your job by punching a time clock to the show the  number of hours you have worked. *I'm going to clock out early today.  I've got a dental appointment*. |
| **couch potato** | If you refer to someone as a *couch potato*, you criticize them for spending a lot of time sitting and watching television. *Don't be such a couch potato. There are better ways of spending your time than in front of the TV.* |
| **rob the cradle** | If you*rob the cradle,*you have a romantic relationship with someone who is much younger than yourself. *My uncle Ted is dating a twenty-year-old girl.  That's really robbing the cradle!* |

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| **darken somebody's door** | If you *darken somebody's door,* you come as an unwanted or unwelcome visitor. *Just get out of here and never darken my door again!* |
| **the door swings both ways** | If you say that the *door swings both ways*, you mean that the same principle or argument applies to both sides of a situation. *"You never call me." "You don't contact me either. The door swings both ways you know!"* |
| **open doors to-from something** | If something*opens doors*, it provides opportunities or possibilities for the future. *A degree from a top university generally opens doors to major companies.* |
| **dead as a doornail** | This expression is used to stress that a person or thing is very definitely dead. *They've started fighting again, so the peace agreement is now as dead as a doornail.* |
| **out of the frying pan into the fire** | This expression means to go from one difficult situation to another one which is usually even worse. *The flight was delayed because of snow.  When the plane eventually took off, it had to turn back because of engine trouble - out of the frying pan into the fire!* |
| **hammer home** | If you *hammer home* a point or an argument, you repeat it often to make sure that it is fully understood. *The police hammered home the dangers of drinking and driving.* |
| **hammer and tongs** | If people are *going at it hammer and tongs*, they are arguing fiercely, with a lot of energy and noise. *Our neighbours are going at it hammer and tongs again. They're constantly arguing.* |
| **fly off the handle** | A person who flies off the handle becomes suddenly very angry. *Dad flew off the handle when I told him I had damaged his new car.* |
| **bring the house down** | If you *bring the house down*, you give a very successful performance. *If he sings like that on Saturday, he'll bring the house down.* |
| **get on like a house on fire** | Two people who get on *like a house on fire* have similar interests and quickly become good friends. *As soon as Sarah met her brother's girlfriend, they got on like a  house on fire.* |
| **(not) give house room** | If you refuse to *give house room* to someone or something, you do not accept them into your home because you dislike or disapprove of them. *I wouldn't give house room to that painting - it's grotesque!* |
| **on the house** | Something which is *on the house* is offered free of charge, usually in a bar or restaurant. *The new owner offered us a drink on the house.* |
| **put house in order** | If you tell someone to*put their house in order*, you are saying that they should organise their own affairs or take care of their own problems before giving advice to other people. *You should put your house in order before telling me what to do!* |
| **different kettle of fish** | To describe a person, thing or situation as a*different kettle of fish* means that it is completely different from what was previously mentioned. *You may have good business relations, but living in that country is a different kettle of fish.* |
| **not the sharpest knife in the drawer** | ‘Sharp’ means ‘clever’ or ‘intelligent’.  This expression is used to say that someone is not very intelligent. *Nobody was surprised when Johnny misunderstood the message. We all know he’s not the sharpest knife in the drawer!* |
| **under the knife** | If a person goes *under the knife*, they have surgery. *I'm not worried about the anaesthetic.  I've been under the knife several times.* |

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| **light bulb moment** | A*light bulb moment* is when you have a sudden moment of inspiration, comprehension or realization. *Harry had a light-bulb moment when he finally realized what was blocking the mechanism.* |
| **not the brightest bulb in the box** | ‘Bright’ means ‘clever’ or ‘intelligent’.  This expression is used to say that someone is not very intelligent. *Max has failed the exam for the third time!  He's obviously not the brightest bulb in the box!* |
| **see in a new light** | If you*see something in a new light,* you view it in a way that makes you change the opinion you had before. *After listening to my colleague, I began to see things in a new light.* |
| **mug's game** | An unprofitable or ill-advised activity that only a fool (mug) would do is called*a mug's game.* *Spending hours making home-made cakes for a few customers is a mug's game.* |
| **big picture** | If you talk about the*big picture*, you refer to the overall situation, or the project as a whole rather than the details. *While each aspect is important, try not to forget the big picture.* |
| **picture of health** | Someone who *looks the picture of health* looks extremely healthy. *Nice to see you again Mr. Brown.  I must say you look the picture of health!* |
| **a picture is worth a thousand words** | This expression means that a picture can give just as much information as a large amount of descriptive text. *Look at the picture of the crash! A picture is worth a thousand words isn't it?* |
| **get the picture** | A person who *gets the picture* understands what is being explained or described. *The alarm went off and people started running everywhere - you get the picture I'm sure!* |
| **put in the picture** | If you give somebody all the information necessary to enable them to fully understand a situation, you *put them in the picture.* *Some changes were made during your absence.  Let me put you in the picture.* |
| **a lot on your plate** | If someone*has a lot on their plate,* they are extremely busy or have several problems to handle at the same time. *It's not a good time to discuss the problem with David.  He's got a lot on his plate at the moment.* |
| **want head on a platter** | If someone makes you so angry that you want them to be punished, you *want their head on a platter.* *He was so angry when he read the article about his family that he wanted the journalist's head on a platter.* |
| **poker face** | If you have a *poker face*, you show no emotion at all. *All during the trial the criminal kept a poker face.* |
| **pot calling kettle black** | This expression is used in a situation where a person with a fault criticizes someone else for having the same fault. *After being disqualified for not obeying the rules, the player accused another competitor of cheating; it was the pot calling the kettle black!* |
| **potluck** | If you *take pot luck,* you accept whatever is available without knowing what it will be like. *We were so hungry we decided to take pot luck and stopped at the first restaurant we saw.* |
| **raise the roof** | When people *raise the roof,* they make a lot of noise by cheering, shouting, whistling or clapping their hands. *The concert was such a success, the audience raised the roof.* |
| **sweep under the rug** | If you *sweep something under the rug* (or carpet), you try to hide it because it is embarrassing. *They tried unsuccessfully to sweep the scandal under the rug.* |
| **brain/memory like a sieve** | Someone who has a*brain (*or*memory) like a sieve* has a very bad memory and forgets things easily. *Oh, I forgot to buy the bread - I've got a brain like a sieve these days!* |
| **pour water into a sieve** | If someone spends time or energy trying to do something that is inefficient or useless, it is*like pouring water into a sieve.* *Danny's mother used to say that teaching him good behaviour was like pouring water into a sieve.* |
| **born with a silver *spoon* in one's mouth** | A person who is*born with a silver spoon in their mouth* is born into a very rich family. *She never has to worry about money; she was born with a silver spoon in her mouth.* |

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| **another string to your bow** | If you have*another string to your bow,* you have another skill or possible course of action if everything else fails. *As well as her excellent qualifications, she's got another string to her bow to help her find a job.  She speaks fluent Chinese.* |
| **no strings attached** | An offer*'with no strings attached'* is an offer made without conditions or restrictions, and requires nothing in return. *I managed to get a loan with no strings attached.* |
| **put/lay one's cards on thetable** | If you *put your cards on the table*, you speak honestly and openly about your feelings and intentions. *Let's clean the air and put our cards on the table.* |
| **storm in a teacup** | To refer to something as*a storm in a teacup* means that people are making a lot of unnecessary fuss or getting excited about something unimportant. *They were arguing about who should go to the supermarket, but it was just a storm in a teacup.* |
| **storm in a teacup** | To refer to something as*a storm in a teacup* means that people are making a lot of unnecessary fuss or getting excited about something unimportant. *They were arguing about who should go to the supermarket, but it was just a storm in a teacup.* |
| **useful as a chocolate teapot** | Something which is of no practical use at all is about *as useful as a chocolate teapot.* *When there are no roads, a car is about as useful as a chocolate teapot!* |
| **not the sharpest tool in the shed** | ‘Sharp’ means ‘clever’ or ‘intelligent’.  This expression is used to say that someone is not very intelligent. *Trust Andy to misunderstand! Of course we know he’s not the sharpest tool in the shed!* |
| **bang one's head against a brick wall** | If you *bang or knock your head against a brick wall*, you continue vainly to try to achieve something in spite of several unsuccessful attempts. *I've been banging my head against a brick wall trying to explain the internet to my grandmother!* |
| **like talking to a brickwall** | To say that a conversation with someone is *like talking to brick wal*l means that communication is impossible because there is no reaction or response. *I tried to discuss the problem with him but it was like talking to a brick wall.* |
| **throw over the wall** | If someone*throws something over the wall,* they deal with part of a problem or project, then pass the responsibility to another person or department without any communication or coordination. *You can't just manufacture a product then throw it over the wall to the sales department!* |
| **writing on the *wall*** | This refers to a situation where there are signs showing that a problem is going to occur. *We all knew Larry was going to lose his job, but he refused to see the writing on the wall.* |
| **good *walls* make good neighbours** | This expression means that respecting one another's privacy helps create a good relationship between neighbours. *We try not to disturb the people next door. Good walls make good neighbours!* |
| **bounce off the *walls*** | Someone who is very excited about something, or full of nervous energy, is said to be*bouncing off the walls.* *Danny can't wait to start his new job.  He's bouncing off the walls.* |
| **window on the world** | When something provides an opportunity to observe and learn about people and life in other countries, it is called *a window on the world.* *The internet has become a window on the world.* |
| **window shopping** | When people go *window shopping,* they look at things in shop windows, without actually purchasing anything. *I haven't been paid yet,  so I can only go window shopping.* |
| **go out the *window*** | If a quality, principle or opportunity*goes out the window,*it disappears, is lost or is abandoned. *When the plant closed down, all hopes of finding a job went out the window.* |

*English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions*

***Honesty - Dishonesty***

(Idioms, page 1 :  above board  →  economical with the truth )

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| **above board** | If a situation or business is described as*above board*, it is open, honest and legal. *There are not secret negotiations.  Our dealings have always been above board.* |
| **barefaced liar** | Someone who lies easily, with a total lack of shame, is a*barefaced liar.* *That barefaced liar stole my watch and said he'd found it!* |
| **bend the truth** | If you *bend the truth*, you say something that is not entirely true. *Ok, I bent the truth a bit.  I told him it was my natural colour, but I didn't say that my hairdresser helped me to keep it natural!* |
| **benefit of the doubt** | If you give someone the *benefit of the doubt*, you choose to believe that the person is innocent, honest or telling the truth, because there is no evidence to the contrary. *Although he found it hard to believe Tom's explanation, the teacher decided to give him the benefit of the doubt.* |
| **black market** | The *black market* refers to the illegal buying and selling of goods or currencies. *Be careful of what you buy on the black market - it's not always good quality.* |
| **break every rule** | If you behave in a completely unacceptable way, you *break every rule in the book.* *Our competitors obtained the contract by breaking every rule in the book.* |
| **buy a lemon** | If buy something, especially a car, that is defective, unsatisfactory, constantly gives trouble or stops running after a short time, you *buy a lemon.* *The car I bought was a real lemon.  It broke down two weeks later.* |
| **in cahoots with someone** | If one person is*in cahoots* with another, they are working in close partnership, usually conspiring to do something dishonest. *There was a rumour that the Mayor was in cahoots with a chain of supermarkets.* |
| **cards on the table** | If you *put your cards on the table*, you speak honestly and openly about your feelings and intentions. *Let's clean the air and put our cards on the table.* |
| **catch red-handed** | If a person is*caught red-handed*, they are caught while they are doing something wrong or illegal. *The police arrived as the burglar was leaving the house.  He was caught red-handed.* |
| **cook the books** | A person who*cooks the books* is one who changes the facts or figures in the financial accounts, often in order to steal money. *The actor discovered after a while that his agent was cooking the books.* |
| **crooked as a dog's hind leg** | To say that someone is as *crooked as a dog's hind leg* means that they are very dishonest indeed. *He can't be trusted - he's as crooked as a dog's hind leg.* |
| **daylight robbery** | The term *daylight robbery* is used when the price of something is thought to be much too high. *$10 for an orange juice? That's daylight robbery!* |
| **economical with the truth** | To say that a person is*economical with the truth* means that, without actually lying, they omit important facts or give incomplete information. *The politician was accused of being economical with the truth.* |

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| **face value** | If you*take something at its face value,* you assume that it is genuinely what it appears to be. *The car seems to be in good condition, but don't take it at its face value;  get a mechanic to check it out.* |
| **fair and square** | If something is obtained or won*fair and square*, it is done in an honest and open manner, the rules are respected and there is no cheating or lying. *Gavin won the competition fair and square - there was no doubt about the result.* |
| **fall off the back of a lorry** | Goods that have*fallen off the back of a lorry* are stolen goods. *Judging by the price of that camera, it must have fallen off the back of a lorry!* |
| **false pretences** | If you obtain something *under false pretences*, you deceive others by lying about your identity, qualifications, financial or social position, in order to get what you want. *The journalist obtained the interview under false pretences.* |
| **five finger discount** | If somebody gets a*five-finger discount*, they take something without paying.  In other words, they steal. *How could he afford that watch? Who knows - perhaps with a five-finger discount!* |
| **fly-by-night** | A*fly-by-night*person, business or venture is considered untrustworthy because they operate briefly and disappear overnight *I bought it in one of those fly-by-night stores and now I can't exchange it.  The place has closed down.* |
| **funny business** | A business which is conducted in a deceitful, dishonest or unethical manner is called*funny business*. *I've got suspicions about that association.  I think they're up to some funny business.* |
| **grease someone's palm** | If you accuse someone of*greasing somebody's palm*, you are accusing them of giving money to someone in order to gain an unfair advantage or to obtain something they want. *In some countries, it is common practice to grease government officials' palms.* |
| **hand in glove** | Two or more people who are in collusion, or work in close association, are said to be*hand in glov*e. *After the match, it was discovered that he was hand in glove with the referee.* |
| **ill-gotten gains** | Money, profit or benefits that are made in a dishonest or illegal manner are called*ill-gotten gains*. *He won money by cheating and is now enjoying his ill-gotten gains.* |
| **lead up the garden path** | If someone*leads you up the garden path*, they deceive you by making you believe something which is not true. *I still haven't got the promotion I was promised.  I think my boss is leading me up the garden path!* |
| **lie one's way in/out of** | If you obtain something or get out of a situation by telling lies, you *lie your way in*or*out*of it. *He lied his way into a well-paid position.* |
| **lie through one's teeth** | If you*lie through your teeth,* you lie openly and brazenly, knowing that what you are saying is completely false. *I saw him breaking the window.  If he denies it, he's lying through his teeth.* |

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| **live a lie** | If you spend your life hiding something important about yourself, or inventing something which is not true, you*live a lie.* *To  hide his  humble origins, he told his wife he had no family and spent his life living a lie.* |
| **money laundering** | When people*launder money,* they manage to conceal the source of illegally-obtained money so that it is believed to be legitimate. *Certain countries have been accused of facilitating money laundering.* |
| **monkey business** | An activity which is organised in a deceitful or dishonest way is called *monkey business.* *The results announced seem suspicious - I think there's some monkey business going on.* |
| **oldest trick in the book** | A well-known and much-used trick, which is still effective today, is called the *oldest trick in the book. He made a noise to attract my attention while his accomplice stole my wallet - the oldest trick in the book!* |
| **on the level** | If you say that someone is *on the level,* you are referring to an honest and truthful person. *Tell me straight - is he on the level or not?* |
| **pack of lies** | A large number of untruthful statements is referred to as *a pack of lies.* *The story about her unhappy childhood turned out to be a pack of lies*. |
| **pad the bill** | If someone*pads the bill,* they add false items to a bill or invoice in order to increase the total amount. *Check the invoice carefully before paying - he tends to pad the bill!* |
| **play the game** | If you *play the game*, you accept to do things according to generally-accepted customs or code of behaviour. *Not all website owners play the game. Some download content from other sites without permission.* |
| **play games with someone** | If you are not completely honest, or behave in a way that is insincere, evasive or intentionally misleading, you are *playing games with someone.* *Look, stop playing games with us.  Just tell us if you're interested in the project or not.* |
| **play by the rules** | If you *play by the rules*, you behave in a fair and honest way with people. *You can trust him, don't worry.  He always plays by the rules.* |
| **pull a fast one** | To *pull a fast one* means to gain an advantage over someone by deceiving them. *The street vendor pulled a fast one on Tom.  He sold him a big bunch of roses but wrapped a smaller bunch while Tom was taking out his wallet.* |
| **rip-off** | To say that something is*a rip-off*means that it costs much more than it should. *$10 for an orange juice?  That's a rip-off!* |
| **scales fall from eyes** | When the *scales fall from your eyes,* you finally understand the truth about something. *It was only when he was arrested for theft that the scales fell from my eyes and I realized where his money came from.* |
| **sharp practice** | Trying to achieve something by using underhand, deceitful or dishonourable means, that are barely within the law, is called *sharp practice.*  *That company is under investigation for sharp practice so it's better to avoid dealing with them.* |

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| **short end of the stick** | If you *get the short end of the stick,* you are treated unfairly or receive less than what is due or deserved. *They reached an agreement but Sophie felt she got the short end of the stick.* |
| **shoulder surfing** | The practice of looking over somebody's shoulder when they are using a computer, cash dispenser or other electronic device, in order to obtain personal information (identification, account number, password, etc.) is called *shoulder surfing.* |
| **siphon off** | If someone *siphons something off*, they transfer something from one place to another, often illegally. *It was discovered that he had siphoned off money from the business into an account in a tax haven.* |
| **smoke and mirrors** | An attempt to conceal or distort the truth (like a magician) in order to confuse people is called *smoke and mirrors.* *The outgoing president used smoke and mirrors to make the situation look better.* |
| **smokescreen** | A*smokescreen*is an action or tactic intended to conceal or divert attention from your real intentions or activities. *His travel business was just a smokescreen for his political activities.* |
| **smoking gun** | A *smoking gun* is a piece of evidence or the indisputable sign of someone's guilt. *The fingerprints left on the door-handle was the smoking gun that enabled the police to arrest him.* |
| **sow the seeds of suspicion** | If someone's behaviour, or something they say, *sows the seeds of suspicion*, it leads people to suspect that they are guilty. *The fact that the boy spent a lot of money after the burglary sowed the seeds of suspicion in the neigbours' minds.* |
| **spin a yarn** | If you*spin a yarn,* you tell a story, usually a long improbable one, with distorted truths. *He failed the exam and spun a yarn about the exam papers being stolen.* |
| **sticky fingers** | Someone who has *sticky fingers* has a tendency to steal. *Items have been disappearing from the stock recently. Do any of the employees have sticky fingers?* |
| **straight as an arrow** | Someone who is *as straight as an arrow* is a morally upright person who is extremely honest. *You can leave the keys with Andy.  He's as straight as an arrow.* |
| **stretch the truth** | When you *stretch the truth,* you exaggerate the facts or say things that are not exactly true. *Some candidates are tempted to stretch the truth about their skills or work experience.* |
| **take someone for a ride** | To*take someone for a ride* means to cheat or deceive them. *I discovered he had charged me double the normal fee.  He really took me for a ride!* |
| **taken to the cleaners** | If someone is*taken to the cleaners,* they lose a lot of money in an unfair way, usually by being robbed or cheated. *When the company Tom had invested in went bankrupt, he realized he had been taken to the cleaners.* |
| **tall story** | A *tall story* is a story which is difficult to believe because it sounds unlikely. *What he said about a stolen invention sounds like a tall story to me.* |
| **throw dust in eyes** | If you*throw dust in someone's eyes*, you prevent them from seeing the truth by misleading them. *He threw dust in the old lady's eyes by pretending to be a police officer, then stole her jewellery.* |

*English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions*

***Hesitation - Indecision - Doubt***

(Idioms :  beat around the bush  →  up in the air)

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| **beat around the bush** | This expression is used to tell someone to say what they have to say, clearly and directly, even if it is unpleasant. *Stop beating around the bush. Just tell me what has been decided!* |
| **blow hot and cold** | If you *blow hot and cold*about something, you constantly change your opinion about it. *The boss keeps blowing hot and cold about the marketing campaign - one day he finds it excellent, the next day he wants to make changes.* |
| **chop and change** | If you *chop and change*, you constantly change your opinion, plans or methods and often cause confusion. *Don't chop and change all the time - just make up your mind!* |
| **cough up** | If you have to *cough up*something, such as money or information,  you give it reluctantly or unwillingly. *He refused to say who attacked him until his father made him cough up the names.* |
| **drag one's feet** | If you*drag your feet,* you delay a decision or participate without any real enthusiasm. *The government is dragging its feet on measures to reduce pollution.* |
| **get cold feet** | If you *get cold feet*about something, you begin to hesitate about doing it; you are no longer sure whether you want to do it or not. *I wanted to enter the competition but at the last minute I got cold feet.* |
| **on the fence** | When faced with a choice, a person who is *on the fence* has not yet reached a decision. *The candidates have such similar ideas that many electors are still on the fence.* |
| **half a mind** | If you have *half a mind*to do something, you are thinking seriously about it but have not yet reached a decision. *I've half a mind to start up my own business but first I need some advice.* |
| **hem and haw** | When someone *hems and haws,* they are very evasive and avoid giving a clear answer. *Bobby hemmed and hawed when his parents asked him where had spent the night.* |
| **jury is still out** | To say that*the jury is still ou*t means that something is under consideration but no decision has been reached yet. *The jury is still out as concerns the location of the new station.* |
| **left hanging in the air** | If a problem or issue is*left hanging in the air* (or*in mid-air*), no decision has been taken so it remains without a solution. *No solution was proposed during the meeting so the question was left hanging in the air.* |
| **prod someone into doing** | If you*prod someone into doing something*, you make a hesitant person do something that they are reluctant to do. *She was ideal for the job, but I had to prod her into applying for the position.* |
| **put out feelers** | Before doing something, if you try to discover what other people think about it by making discreet enquiries, you *put out feelers.* *The politician put out feelers to test public reaction to his proposals.* |
| **remains to be seen** | If something is still unknown or a decision has not yet been taken, it*remains to be seen.* *The construction of a new hospital has been voted, but the exact location remains to be seen.* |
| **in a *quandary*** | If you are*in a quandary,* you find it difficult to decide what to do. *The job offered is less interesting but better paid.  I'm in a quandary about what to do.* |
| **shilly-shally** | If you *shilly-shally,* you hesitate a lot about something and have difficulty reaching a decision. *Come on!  Don't shilly-shally - just make up your mind!* |
| **sleep on it** | If you take time (until the next day) to think something over before making a decision, you *sleep on it.* *I suggest you sleep on it.  You can give me your decision  tomorrow.* |
| **toing and froing** | Someone who is*toing and froing* is either repeatedly going from one place to another and coming back, or is constantly changing their mind about something. *After months of toing and froing, a compromise was reached between the two parties.* |
| **in two minds** | If you are*in two minds* about something, you have difficulty deciding what to do. *I'm in two minds about whether or not to accept the offer.* |
| **up in the air** | If something, such as a plan or decision, is *up in the air*, it has not been decided or settled yet. *I can't give you a definite answer yet;  the project is still up in the air.* |

*English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions*

***Health - Fitness***

(Idioms, page 1 :    in bad shape  →  my dogs are barking)

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| **in bad shape** | A person who is *in bad shape* is in poor physical condition. *I really am in bad shape.  I must do more exercise.* |
| **back on your feet** | If you are *back on your feet*, after an illness or an accident, you are physically healthy again. *My grandmother had a bad 'flu but she's back on her feet again.* |
| **back into shape** | To get yourself *back into shape*, you need to take some exercise in order to become fit and healthy again. *Eva decided she'd have to get back into shape before looking for a job.* |
| **bag of bones** | To say that someone is a *bag of bones* means that they are extremely thin. *When he came home from the war he was a bag of bones.* |
| **full of beans** | A person who is *full of beans* is lively, active and healthy. *He may be getting old but he's still full of beans.* |
| **black out** | If you *black out,* you lose consciousness. *When Tony saw the needle, he blacked out.* |
| **blind as a bat** | Someone whose vision is very poor, or who is unable to see anything, is (as) *blind as a bat.* *Without his glasses, the old man is as blind as a bat.* |
| **blue around the gills (also: *green* or *pale*)** | If a person looks *blue around gills*, they look unwell or sick. *You should sit down.  You look a bit blue around the gills.* |
| **feel blue** | To *feel blue* means to have feelings of deep sadness or depression. *I'm going to see my grandmother. She's feeling a bit blue at the moment.* |
| **kick the bucket** | To *kick the bucket*is a lighthearted way of talking about death. *He will inherit when his grandfather kicks the bucket.* |
| **cast iron stomach** | If you can eat all sorts of food and drink what you like, without any indigestion, discomfort or bad effects, it is said that you have a *cast-iron stomach. I don't know how you can eat that spicy food.  You must have a cast-iron stomach.* |
| **clean bill of health** | If a person has a *clean bill of health*, they have a report or certificate declaring that their health is satisfactory. *All candidates for the position must produce a clean bill of health.* |
| **off *colour*** | If you are*off colour*, you look or feel ill. *What's the matter with Tom? He looks a bit off colour today.* |
| **dead as a doornail** | This expression is used to stress that a person is very definitely dead. *At the end of the winter they found the old man as dead as a doornail.* |
| **(like) *death* warmed up** | If you look*like death warmed up*, you look very ill or tired. *My boss told me to go home.  He said I looked like death warmed up.* |
| **die with one's boots on** | A person who*dies with their boots on* dies while still leading an active life. *He says he'll never retire.  He'd rather die with his boots on!* |
| **dogs are barking** | When a person says that their *dogs are barking* they mean that their feet are hurting. *I've been shopping all day. My dogs are barking!* |

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| **drop like flies** | If people*drop like flies*, they fall ill or die in large  numbers. *There's a 'flu epidemic right now.  Senior citizens are dropping like flies.* |
| **hit the dust** | The expression *hit the dust*is a humorous way of referring to death. *You can have my computer when I hit the dust!* |
| **fit as a fiddle** | A person who is as*fit as a fiddle* is in an excellent state of health or physical condition. *My grandfather is nearly ninety but he's as fit as a fiddle.* |
| **frog in one's throat** | A person who has*a frog in their throat*has difficulty in speaking clearly because they have a cough or a sore throat. *Teaching was difficult today.  I had a frog in my throat all morning.* |
| **hair of the dog that bit you** | Using as a remedy a small amount of what made you ill, for example a drop of alcohol when recovering from drinking too much, is called *'a hair of the dog that bit you'*. *Here, have a drop of this.  It's a hair of the dog that bit you!* |
| **hale and hearty** | Someone, especially an old person, who is *hale and hearty* is in excellent health. *My grandmother is still hale and hearty in spite of her age.* |
| **have a hangover** | To*have a hangove*r means to suffer from the unpleasant after-effects of drinking too much alcohol. *Many young people have a hangover after a party or celebration.* |
| **hard of hearing** | If someone is *hard of hearing*, they can't hear very well. *You'll have to speak louder to Mr. Jones.  He's a bit hard of hearing*. |
| **keep body and soul together** | If someone is able to*keep body and soul together*, they manage to survive. *He was unemployed and homeless, but somehow he managed to keep body and soul together.* |
| **land of the living** | This is a humorous way of saying that someone is still alive. *Hi there!  Glad to see you're still in the land of the living!* |
| **on one's last legs** | If you are *on your last legs*, you are in a very weak condition or about to die. *I was so sick that I felt as though I was on my last legs!* |
| **living on borrowed time** | This expression refers to a period of time after an illness or accident which could have caused death. *After heart surgery, many patients feel that they're living on borrowed time.* |
| **look the picture of health** | To*look the picture of health*means to look extremely healthy. *Nice to see you again Mr. Brown. I must say you look the picture of health.* |
| **meet your maker** | This expression is used to say (often humorously) that someone has died. *Poor old Mr. Potter has gone to meet his maker.* |
| **on the mend** | If someone or something is*on the mend*, they are improving after an illness or a difficult period. *My mother caught the 'flu but she's on the mend now.* |
| **new lease of life** | A person who has a*new lease of life*has a chance to live longer or with greater enjoyment or satisfaction. *Moving closer to his children has given him a new lease of life.* |

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| **go under the knife** | If a person goes *under the knife*, they have surgery. *I'm not worried about the anaesthetic.  I've been under the knife several times.* |
| **one foot in the grave** | A person who is either very old or very ill and close to death has one*foot in the grave. It's no use talking to the owner.  The poor man has one foot in the grave.* |
| **one's number is up** | To say that *one's number is up* means that either a person is in serious difficulty or the time has come when they will die. *His health is declining rapidly so it looks as if his number is up!* |
| **out of sorts** | If someone is *out of sorts,* they are upset and irritable or not feeling well. *The baby is out of sorts today.  Perhaps he's cutting a tooth.* |
| **have pins and needles** | To have *pins and needles* is to have a tingling sensation in a part of the body, for example an arm or a leg, when it has been in the same position for a long time. *I lay curled up for so long that I had pins and needles in my legs.* |
| **in the pink of health** | If you are*in the pink of health*, you are in excellent physical condition. *Caroline looks in the pink of health after her holiday.* |
| **pop one's clogs** | This is a euphemistic way of saying that a person is dead. *Nobody lives in that house since old Roger popped his clogs.* |
| **prime of one's life** | The *prime of one's life*is the time in a person's life when they are in their best physical condition.  *At the age of 75, the singer is not exactly in the prime of his life!* |
| **pull through** | If you *pull through*, you recover from a serious illness. *Doris had to undergo heart surgery but she pulled through.* |
| **pushing up the daisies** | To say that someone is*pushing up the daisies* means that they are dead. *Old Johnny Barnes? He's been pushing up the daisies for over 10 years!* |
| **racked with pain** | When someone is suffering from severe pain, they are *racked with pain.* *The soldier was so badly injured that he was racked with pain.* |
| **ready to drop** | Someone who is *ready to drop* is nearly too exhausted to stay standing. *I've been shopping all day with Judy.  I'm ready to drop!* |
| **recharge one's batteries** | When you *recharge your batteries,* you take a break from a tiring or stressful activity in order to relax and recover your energy. *Sam is completely overworked. He needs a holiday to recharge his batteries.* |
| **right as rain** | If someone is*(as) right as rain,*they are in excellent health or condition. *I called to see my grandmother thinking she was ill, but she was right as rain.* |
| **run down** | A person who is*run down*is in poor physical condition. *She's completely run down from lack of proper food..* |

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| **spare part surgery** | *Spare-part surgery*refers to surgery in which a diseased or non-functioning organ is replaced with a transplanted or artificial organ. |
| **spare tyre** | If a person has *a spare tyre,*they have a roll of flesh around the waist. *I'd better go on a diet - I'm getting a spare tyre!* |
| **take a turn for the worse** | If a person who is ill *takes a turn for the worse,* their illness becomes more serious. *We hoped he would recover but he took a turn for the worse during the night.* |
| **touch and go** | If something is *touch-and-go*, the outcome or result is uncertain. *Dave's life is out of danger now, but it was touch-and-go after the operation.* |
| **under the weather** | If you are*under the weather,*you are not feeling very well. *You look a bit under the weather.  What's the matter?* |
| **up and about** | If someone is*up and about,*they are out of bed or have recovered after an illness. *She was kept in hospital for a week but she's up and about again.* |
| **vim and vigour** | If you are full of *vim and vigour,*you have lots of vitality, energy and enthusiasm. *After a relaxing holiday, my parents came back full of vim and vigour.* |

*English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions*

***Happiness - Sadness***

(Idioms, page 1 :  on cloud nine  → jump for joy  )

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| **on cloud nine** | A person who is *on cloud nine* is very happy because something wonderful has happened. *When the boss announced my promotion, I was on cloud nine.* |
| **cry one's eyes out** | If you*cry your eyes out,*you cry a lot and for a long time. *My son cried his eyes out when he discovered his bike had been stolen.* |
| **like a dog with two tails** | If someone is*like a dog with two tails*, they are extremely happy. *When Paul won the first prize he was like a dog with two tails.* |
| **down in the dumps** | Someone who is *down in the dumps* is depressed or feeling gloomy. *Alex has been down in the dumps since he failed his exam.* |
| **down in the mouth** | When someone is *down in the mouth*, they look unhappy, discouraged or depressed. *You look a bit down in the mouth.  What's the matter?* |
| **face like a wet week-end** | If someone has a *face like a wet week-en*d, they look sad and miserable. *What's wrong with Pete? He's got a face like a wet week-end!* |
| **fool's paradise** | If someone is living in *a fool's paradise*, they are in a state of contentment that will not last because their happiness is based  on illusion or false hope. *Lisa is living in a fool's paradise if she thinks her boss is going to marry her.* |
| **full of the joys of spring** | If you are *full of the joys of spring,* you are happy, enthusiastic and full of energy. *Barbara is full of the joys of spring at the moment!  Has she got a new boyfriend?* |
| **grin from ear to ear** | If somebody*grins from ear to e*ar, they look vey satisfied and happy. *When we saw Paul grinning from ear to ear, we knew he had passed the exam.* |
| **grin like a Cheshire cat** | When someone has a smile on their face because they are happy or satisfied about something, they*grin like a Cheshire cat. I knew she had succeeded when I saw her with a grin like a Cheshire cat.* |
| **happy camper** | Someone who is a *happy camper* is generally content or satisfied with what is happening in their lives and has no complaints. *With his new job and his new car, Andy is a happy camper.* |
| **happy as a flea in a doghouse** | If someone is (as)*happy as a flea in a doghouse*, they are very happy and contented. *Since she moved to a smaller apartment, my mother is as happy as a flea in a doghouse!* |
| **happy as Larry** | If you are (as) *happy as Larry,* you are very happy indeed. *My dad's as happy as Larry at the week-end when we all arrive home.* |
| **happy-go-lucky** | If you are a *happy-go-lucky*person, you are cheerful and carefree all the time. *He's a happy-go-lucky sort of guy - always in good humour.* |
| **your *heart*sinks** | If your *heart sinks*, you feel very unhappy and despondent. *My heart sank when I saw the amount of work waiting for me.* |
| **jump for joy** | When people*jump for joy*, they express their happiness through excited movements and gestures. *The player jumped for joy when he scored the winning goal.* |

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| **life is just a bowl of cherries** | This expression means that life is pleasant and uncomplicated. (This phrase is often used ironically to mean the opposite.) *Now that he's retired, my grandfather says 'life is just a bowl of cherries'.* |
| **lump in your throat** | If you have *a lump in your throat,* you have a tight feeling in your throat because of a strong emotion such as sadness or gratitude. *The speech was so touching that I had a lump in my throat.* |
| **music to your ears** | If something is *music to your ears,*the information that you receive makes you feel very happy. *His compliments were music to my ear.* |
| **never looked back** | If you say that you *never looked back*, you mean that after an event which changed your life for the better, you continue to be happy with the situation. *Since the day she decided to work from home, she has never looked back.* |
| **over the moon** | If you are *over the moon* about something, you are very happy about it. *When she heard the results of the exam, Caroline was over the moon!* |
| **paint the town red** | If you *paint the town red,* you go out and enjoy a lively evening in bars, night-clubs, etc. *To celebrate the victory, the team's supporters painted the town red.* |
| **as pleased as punch** | Someone who is as *pleased or as proud as punch* is delighted or feels very satisfied about something. *Danny was as proud as punch when he won the tennis match.* |
| **in raptures** | If you are*in raptures*about something, you are delighted or very enthusiastic. *Caroline is in raptures about her new apartment.* |
| **stars in your eyes** | If someone has*stars in their eyes,* they are looking extremely happy. *She had stars in her eyes when she saw the car she had won*. |
| **in seventh heaven** | If you are *in seventh heaven,* you are extremely happy. *Every time she wins a match, she's in seventh heaven!* |
| **in stitches** | When people are*in stitches,*they are laughing a lot. *The story was so funny, everyone was in stitches.* |
| **thrilled to bits** | Someone who is*thrilled to bits* is extremely pleased about something. *Julie was thrilled to bits when her project was selected.* |
| **tickled pink** | If you are*tickled pink,* you are very pleased about something. *My dad was tickled pink when he was asked to announce the winner.* |
| **time of your life** | If you have *the time of our life,*you enjoy yourself very much. *The kids had the time of their lives at Disneyland.* |
| **on*top* of the world** | If you feel*on top of the world,* you are extremely happy because everything is going well for you. *It's been such a good year for Amy that she feels on top of the world.* |
| **walking on air** | When you are happy and excited because of a pleasant event that makes you feel as if you are floating, you are *walking on air. Sophie has been walking on air since her painting won the first prize.* |
| **whatever floats your boat** | Although you don't quite agree with someone, it's their choice and you think they should so whatever makes them happy. *You're going to spend your honeymoon in Alaska? Well, whatever floats your boat!* |

*English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions*

***Fun and Enjoyment***

(page 1 :  barrel of laughs  → life of Riley)

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| **barrel of laughs** | Someone who is *a barrel of laughs* is very funny or entertaining.  *Let's invite Johnny. He's such a barrel of laughs!* |
| **with bells on** | If you go somewhere*with bells on*, you are delighted and eager to go there. *Of course I'll be there - with bells on!* |
| **blow away the cobwebs** | If something *blows away the cobwebs*, it makes you feel more lively and refreshes your ideas. *Let's get out of the house. A walk on the beach will blow away the cobwebs!* |
| **chill out** | When people *chill out*, often after a period of heavy work or nervous tension, they do something that helps them to calm down and relax for a while. *After a week of exams, the students needed to go and chill out.* |
| **in one's element** | When you are*in your element*, you are doing something that you do well, and you are enjoying yourself. *My brother, who is an estate agent, was in his element house-hunting for our parents.* |
| **feast your eyes on** | If you*feast your eyes* on something, you are delighted and gratified by what you see. *As he drove along the coast, he feasted his eyes on the beautiful scenery.* |
| **footloose and fancy-free** | A person who is*footloose and fancy free* has few responsibilities or  commitments of any kind and feels free to do as they please. *John will never get married. He says he prefers to be footloose and fancy free.* |
| **in full swing** | When something, such as an event, gets*into full swing*, it is at its busiest or liveliest time. *When we got back to the office, the Christmas party was in full swing.* |
| **full of the joys of spring** | If you are *full of the joys of spring,* you are happy, enthusiastic and full of energy. *Barbara is full of the joys of spring at the moment!  Has she got a new boyfriend?* |
| **guilty pleasure** | Enjoying something which is not generally held in high regard, while at the same time feeling a bit guilty about it, is called a *guilty pleasure.* *Reading gossip magazines is a guilty pleasure for many women… and some men too!* |
| **happy-go-lucky** | If you are a *happy-go-lucky*person, you are cheerful and carefree all the time. *He's a happy-go-lucky sort of guy - always in good humour.* |
| **have a ball** | If you *have a ball* you enjoy yourself immensely. *The party was great. We had a ball.* |
| **have the time of your life** | If you have *the time of our life,*you enjoy yourself very much. *The kids had the time of their lives at Disneyland.* |
| **have a whale of a time** | When people have*a whale of a time,* they enjoy themselves a lot. *We had a whale of a time at the party last night.* |
| **let one's hair down** | If you suggest that someone should*let their hair down*, you are telling them to relax and enjoy themselves. *Come on!  We're not in the office now.  You can let your hair down!* |
| **life and soul of the party** | The*life and soul of the party* is the most lively and amusing person present at an event. *I'm so glad we invited Emily. She was the life and soul of the party.* |
| **live the life of Riley** | A person who*lives the life of Riley*has a comfortable and enjoyable life, without having to make much effort. *He married a millionaire, and since then he's been living the life of Riley!* |

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| **more fun than a barrel of monkeys** | If something is very amusing or enjoyable, you can say that it is *more fun than a barrel of monkeys.*  *The TV quiz was more fun than a barrel of monkeys!* |
| **paint the town red** | If you *paint the town red,* you go out and enjoy a lively evening in bars, night-clubs, etc. *To celebrate the victory, the team's supporters painted the town red* |
| **party is over** | To say that*the party is over* means that a period of happiness, freedom, enjoyment etc. has come to an end, and life is going to return to normal. *I had a wonderful time here but the party's over and I must get back to work.* |
| **pull someone's leg** | If you *pull somebody's leg,* you tease them by telling them something that is not true. *Of course I'm not going to buy a sports car.  I was just pulling your leg!* |
| **pull the other one (it's got bells on)** | After hearing an unlikely story, this is a way of telling the speaker that you neither believe what they say nor whatever they may say next. *You have a date with George Clooney? Yeah - now pull the other one!* |
| **punch line** | The*punch line*is the funny sentence that ends a joke or an amusing story. *When my dad tells jokes, he never gets the punch line right!* |
| **ring out the old year and ring in the new** | This expression means to announce and celebrate the end of one year and the beginning of the next. |
| **social butterfly** | A person who has a lot of friends and acquaintances and likes to flit from one social event to another is called a *social butterfly.* *Jessica is constantly out and about;  she's a real social butterfly.* |
| **sow one's wild oats** | A person, usually a man, who*sows their wild oats*goes through a period of carefree pleasure-seeking while they are young. *He was advised to sow his wild oats before he got married.* |
| **take it easy** | When you relax, or do things at a comfortable pace, you *take it easy.* *It's nice to slow down at the week-end and take it easy.* |
| **tickle the ivories** | This is a humorous way of talking about playing the piano. *My grandfather loves playing the piano; he tickles the ivories whenever he can.* |
| **wet the baby's head** | This expression means to have drink to celebrate the birth of a baby. *When his first child was born, Tom invited his colleagues to a local bar to wet the baby's head.* |
| **the world is your oyster** | This expression means that you are free and able to enjoy the pleasures and opportunities that life has to offer. *She left college feeling that the world was her oyster.* |

*English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions*

***Frankness - Sincerity***

(idioms, page 1 :  bare one's heart  →  words of one syllable)

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| **bare one's heart/soul** | If you *bare you heart* (or *soul*) to someone, you reveal your innermost thoughts and feelings to them. *Mike couldn't keep things to himself any longer. He decided to bare his soul to his best friend.* |
| **don't beat/stop beating around the bush** | This expression is used to tell someone to say what they have to say, clearly and directly, even if it is unpleasant. *Stop beating around the bush. Just tell me what has been decided!* |
| **call a spade a spade** | A person who *calls a spade a spade* speaks openly and truthfully about something, especially difficult matters. *What I like about the new manager is that he calls a spade a spade - it makes things so much easier for everyone.* |
| **put/lay one's cards on the table** | If you *put your cards on the table*, you speak honestly and openly about your feelings and intentions. *Let's clean the air and put our cards on the table.* |
| **clear the air** | If you decide to *clear the air*, you try to remove the causes of fear, worry or suspicion by talking about the problem openly. *The atmosphere had become so unpleasant that he decided it was time to clear the air.* |
| **come clean** | To*come clean* about something means to tell the truth. *The boy was encouraged to come clean and tell the authorities what happened.* |
| **home truths** | If you tell somebody some *home truths*, you tell them some unpleasant facts about themselves which are often difficult to accept. *David needs to be told some home truths, whether he likes it or not!* |
| **in vino veritas** | This expression, which in Latin means 'in wine there is truth', is a way of saying that wine makes people less inhibited and leads them to speak more freely and reveal their true feelings. *After a few drinks he told us the whole story - in vino veritas!* |
| **lay it on the line** | If you speak frankly and make something very clear, you *lay it on the line.* *The boss laid it on the line and told Jimmy that if he arrived late for work again he would lose his job.* |
| **make no bones about** | If you *make no bones* about something, you don't hesitate to say something in a frank and open way. *I made no bones about it.   I told him his offer was unacceptable.* |
| **not mince one's words** | Someone who does *not mince their words*expresses their opinions, ideas or thoughts very clearly, even if they offend others by doing so. *Come on John!  Tell us what you really think - and don't mince your words.* |
| **on the level** | If you say that someone is *on the level,* you are referring to an honest and truthful person. *Tell me straight - is he on the level or not?* |
| **open the kimono** | If a person or organisation*opens the kimono,* they reveal something previously hidden. *It's time to open the kimono and explain that we cannot meet the deadline.* |
| **pull no punches** | If someone *pulls no punches*, they speak openly and honestly, holding nothing back. *The doctor pulled no punches.  He explained in detail the risks of the operation.* |
| **say a mouthful** | If you make an important or lengthy remark, you *say a mouthful.* *The customer said a mouthful when he gave the reason for his dissatisfaction.* |
| **unvarnished truth** | If you present someone with plain facts, without trying to embellish or soften the reality, you give them the*unvarnished truth.* *Tell me how the accident happened, and I want the unvarnished truth.* |
| **words of one syllable** | If you explain something in words of one syllable, you use very simple language. *Not so fast!  Tell me in words of one syllable!* |

*English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions*

***Food & Drink***

(idioms, page 1 :  acquired taste  → slice of the cake )

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| **acquired taste** | Something that you dislike when you first taste it, but begin to like after trying it several times, is *an acquired taste*. *Tony has always loved olives, but for me it was an acquired taste.* |
| **apple of your eye** | A person, usually a child, who is*the apple of your eye*is one for whom you have great affection. *My grandson is the apple of my eye.* |
| **apple-pie order** | If something is*in apple-pie order*, it is well organised or in perfect order. *They made sure the house was in apple-pie order before their parents arrived back home.* |
| **go bananas** | If someone becomes very emotional and starts behaving in a crazy way, they *go bananas.* *If you announce that you are going to drop out of school, your parents will go bananas!* |
| **full of beans** | A person who is*full of beans* is lively, healthy and active. *He may be getting old but he's still full of beans.* |
| **spill the beans** | If you *spill the beans,* you reveal a secret or talk about something private. *Come on!  Spill the beans!  What did he say?* |
| **brown as a berry** | To say that someone is as *brown as a berry*means that they are very tanned. *Judy came back from her holiday as brown as a berry.* |
| **that takes the biscuit!** | This expression refers to something very annoying or irritating. *After waiting for an hour, we were told there no seats left.  That took the biscuit!* |
| **know which side yourbread is buttered** | If you know *which side your bread is buttered*, you know where your interests lie or what will be to your advantage. *Jack never argues with his father-in-law.  He knows which side his bread is buttered.* |
| **take the bread out of somebody's mouth** | If you*take the bread out of somebody's mouth*, you take away their means of earning a living. *The decision to ban street vendors took the bread out of the mouths of many people.* |
| **butter somebody up** | When you *butter someone up,* you flatter them or you are very nice to them, especially if you want to obtain something. *He was so keen to get the job that he spent his time buttering up the boss.* |
| **butter wouldn't melt in your mouth** | If you say that someone looks as if *butter wouldn't melt in their mouth,*you mean that they look completely innocent, but that they are capable of doing unpleasant things. *The boy who stole the purse looked as if butter wouldn't melt in his mouth.* |
| **piece of cake** | To refer to something as *a piece of cake*means that you consider it to be very easy. *The English test was a piece of cake!* |
| **slice/share of the cake(or *pie*)** | When people feel entitled to a share of the profits or benefits, they want a (larger) *slice of the cake*. *Since profits are higher this year, the workers feel they deserve a bigger slice of the cake.* |

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| **have your cake and eat it** | To say that someone wants to *have their cake and eat it* means that they want the advantages of two alternative situations when only one is possible. *Jack enjoys his comfort but is always complaining about the cost of things.  He can't have his cake and eat it.* |
| **icing on the cake** | If something is referred to as *icing on the cake*, it is an extra benefit that makes a good situation even better. *Good news!  I get the job ... and the icing on the cake is that I get a company car too!* |
| **slice/share of the cake(or *pie*)** | When people feel entitled to a share of the profits or benefits, they want a (larger) *slice of the cake*. *Since profits are higher this year, the workers feel they deserve a bigger slice of the cake.* |
| **cake not worth the candle** | To say that *the cake* *is not worth the candle* means that the advantages to be gained from doing something are not worth the effort involved. *He recorded an album but sold very few copies; the cake wasn't worth the candle.* |
| **sell like hot cakes** | Things that *sell like hot cakes* sell quickly or in large quantities. *Her books always sell like hot cakes.* |
| **carrot and stick** | If you use a*carrot-and-stick approach*, you use the promise of reward and the threat of punishment to make someone work harder. *Some parents use a carrot-and-stick approach to obtain good results from their children.* |
| **champagne taste on a beer budget** | Someone who likes expensive things that they cannot afford has*champagne taste on a beer budget.* *Eve borrows money to buy expensive designer clothes -  champagne taste on a beer budget!* |
| **big cheese** | This expression refers to a person who has a lot of power and influence in an organisation. *Tom's father is a big cheese in the oil industry.* |
| **like chalk and cheese** | Two people who are like, or as different as, *chalk and cheese* are completely different from each other. *I'm surprised they get on so well.  They're as different as chalk and cheese.* |
| **cheesed off** | If someone is *cheesed off* with something, they are annoyed, bored or frustrated. *Jenny is absolutely cheesed off with her job.* |
| **cherry pick** | When you*cherry pick,* you choose something with great care and select only the best. *Top university graduates are often cherry-picked by large companies.* |
| **get a second bite/two bites at the cherry** | This expression means that you get a second opportunity to do or try something. *He was eliminated in the semi-finals, but he'll get a second bite at the cherry next year.* |
| **life is just a bowl ofcherries** | This expression means that life is pleasant and uncomplicated. (This phrase is often used ironically to mean the opposite.) *Now that he's retired, my grandfather says 'life is just a bowl of cherries'.* |
| **old chestnut** | A story, joke or an idea that has been repeated so often that it has lost its novelty is referred to as an '*old chestnut'*. *The story about his boat capsizing has become an old chestnut!* |

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| **useful as a chocolateteapot** | Something which is of no practical use at all is about *as useful as a chocolate teapot.* *When there are no roads, a car is about as useful as a chocolate teapot!* |
| **that's the way the cookie crumbles** | To say *'that's the way the cookie crumbles'* means that is the way things are and nothing can be done about it - that's life! |
| **sharp cookie** | Someone who is not easily fooled or deceived is a *sharp cookie.* *You can't fool my grandmother.  She's a sharp cookie!* |
| **tough cookie** | A person who is a*tough cookie*is someone with a strong and determined character who is not easily intimidated, discouraged or defeated.  *I'm not worried about Jason's future - he's a tough cookie!* |
| **cream rises to the top** | Someone or something exceptionally good will eventually attract attention or stand out from the rest, just as*cream rises to the top* in coffee or tea. *I knew you'd succeed.  As the saying goes: 'cream rises to the top'!* |
| **cool as a cucumber** | A person who is as *cool as a cucumber* is not anxious, but relaxed and non-emotional. *The bride's mother stayed as cool as a cucumber all through the ceremony.* |
| **eat you out of house and home** | This is a humorous way of saying that someone is eating large quantities of your food. *I stock up with food when my teenage sons invite their friends over. They'd eat you out of house and home!* |
| **grab a bite to eat** | If you *grab a bite to eat*, you get something to eat quickly. *We should have time to grab a bite to eat before the show.* |
| **egg someone on** | If you*egg someone on*, you urge or strongly encourage them to do something. *She didn't really want to learn to drive but her children kept egging her on.* |
| **bad egg** | Someone who is a *bad egg*is an untrustworthy person often involved in trouble whose company should be avoided. *I don't my son to be friends with Bobby Smith.  Bobby's a bad egg!* |
| **nest egg** | If you have a*nest egg,* you have a reserve of money which you put aside for future needs. *Our parents consider the money from the sale of their house as a nest egg for their old age.* |
| **can't make an omelette without breaking eggs** | This expression means that it is impossible to make important changes without causing some unpleasant effects. *Some people will lose their jobs after the merger, but you can't make an omelette without breaking eggs.* |
| **have all your eggs in one basket** | If you have*all your eggs in one basket*, you depend on one plan or one source of income. *If you invest your savings in one bank, you'll have all your eggs in one basket.* |
| **over-egg the pudding** | If you try to improve something excessively by adding unnecessary details, *you over-egg the pudding.* *Keep your report simple.  Don't over-egg the pudding.* |
| **food for thought** | If something give you*food for thought*, it makes you think seriously about a particular subject. *The documentary on poverty in the world really gave me food for thought.* |

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| **bear fruit** | If something *bears fruit*, it produces positive or successful results. *After years of hard work, his research finally began to bear fruit.* |
| **low-hanging fruit** | To refer to something as a *low-hanging fruit*means that it is a target that can be easily reached, or a goal that can  be accomplished with a minimum of effort. *Teenagers are low-hanging fruit for fashionable mobile devices.* |
| **nutty as a fruitcake** | Someone who is *(as) nutty as a fruitcake* is insane or crazy. *Don't pay attention to what the old man says; he's as nutty as a fruitcake!* |
| **play gooseberry** | If you *play gooseberry*, you join or accompany two people who have a  romantic relationship and want to be alone. *They invited me to join them but I didn't want to play gooseberry.* |
| **sour grapes** | To say that someone's attitude is*'sour grapes'* means that they are trying to make others believe that something they cannot have is of no importance. *When she didn't get the job she said she wasn't interested in it anyway, but that's just sour grapes!* |
| **walk and chew gum** | If you can *walk and chew gum* (at the same time), you are able to do more than one thing at a time. (This expression is often used negatively to indicate incompetence) *Why did you hire that guy?  He can't walk and chew gum at the same time!* |
| **icing on the cake** | If something is referred to as *icing on the cake*, it is an extra benefit that makes a good situation even better. *Good news!  I get the job ... and the icing on the cake is that I get a company car too!* |
| **money for jam** | A very easy way of earning money is called *money for jam.* *All you've got to do is hand out brochures.  It's money for jam!* |
| **buy a lemon** | If you buy something, especially a car, that is defective, unsatisfactory, constantly gives problems or stops running after a short time, you*buy a lemon.* The car I bought was*a real lemon*. It broke down two weeks later. |
| **square meal** | When people talk about*a square meal,* they mean a substantial and satisfying meal. *I don't need a fancy restaurant, just a place where I can get a square meal.* |
| **milk of human kindness** | Someone who has, or is full of, the *milk of human kindness*, is naturally kind and compassionate to others. *She's a wonderful person - full of the milk of human kindness.* |
| **no use crying over spiltmilk** | This expression means that it is useless to complain or have regrets about something that is done and cannot be changed. *Sometimes I regret not acccepting the offer, but it's no use crying over spilt milk.* |
| **make mincemeat of** | If you *make mincemeat of* someone or something, you completely and utterly defeat or destroy them. *A good lawyer would make mincemeat of your rival's accusations.* |
| **as keen as mustard** | If someone is *as keen as mustard*, they are very eager, enthusiastic or motivated. *We should ask Emily to join the team.  She's as keen as mustard.* |
| **sledgehammer to crack a nut** | Using *a sledgehammer to crack a nut* means using disproportionate force to solve a problem. *He called the police because his neighbour was rude? - now that's using a sledgehammer to crack a nut!* |

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| **go nuts** | To say that a person has *gone nuts* means that they have become completely foolish, eccentric or mad. *I think the old lady has gone nuts!  It's very hot today and she's wearing a fur coat!* |
| **olive branch** | If a person or organisation holds out *an olive branch* to another, they show that they want to end a disagreement and make peace. *The protesters finally accepted the olive branch extended to them.* |
| **can't make an omelettewithout breaking eggs** | This expression means that it is impossible to make important changes without causing some unpleasant effects. *Some people will lose their jobs after the merger, but you can't make an omelette without breaking eggs.* |
| **paid peanuts** | If you are*paid peanuts,* you have a very low salary. *Jenny has a very interesting job, but she's paid peanuts.* |
| **go pear-shaped** | If a plan or project *goes pear-shaped*, it either goes wrong or it produces an undesirable result. *Jane organised a treasure hunt in the park for the kids but it all went pear-shaped because of the rain.* |
| **two peas in a pod** | To say that two people are like*two peas in a pod* means that they are very similar in appearance. *It wasn't difficult to identify the brothers - they were like two peas in a pod.* |
| **in a pickle** | If you are *in a pickle,* you are in a difficult situation and need help. *My car won't start and the trains are on strike today, so I'm in a real pickle!* |
| **pie in the sky** | If an idea or project is *pie in the sky,* it is completely unrealistic or unlikely to be achieved. *The promise of low-cost housing for everyone turned out to be pie in the sky.* |
| **easy as pie** | If something is*easy as pie*, it is very easy to do. *"How did the English test go?" "No problem - it was easy as pie."* |
| **eat humble pie** | If you*eat humble pie,* you are forced to admit that you were wrong and apologize. *After openly criticizing Bill's work, Fred had to eat humble pie when Bill was elected 'salesman of the year'.* |
| **pie-eyed** | Someone who is*pie-eyed*is completely drunk. *He had never taken an alcoholic drink so after one beer the boy was pie-eyed.* |
| **plum job** | A desirable position which is well-paid and considered relatively easy is called *a plum job.* *Ideally he'd like to find himself a plum job in New York.* |
| **plum in your mouth** | Someone who speaks with an upper-class accent is said to have *a plum in their mouth.* *He speaks just like an aristocrat - with a plum in his mouth!* |
| **couch potato** | If you refer to someone as a *couch potato*, you criticize them for spending a lot of time sitting and watching television. *Don't be such a couch potato. There are better ways of spending your time than in front of the TV.* |
| **hot potato** | A*hot potato* is a very sensitive and controversial matter which is difficult to deal with. *The new Prime Minister hasn't been confronted with any hot potatoes yet.* |

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| **drop like a hot potato** | If you *drop someone or something like a hot potato*, you leave them or immediately stop associating with them. *As soon as the article was published, she dropped him like a hot potato.* |
| **small potatoes** | Something that is *small potatoes* is considered to be unimportant or insignificant. *Her first publication was considered small potatoes but her new book has lead to a change of opinion.* |
| **proof of the pudding** | This expression means that something new can only be judged after it has been tested. *I'm going to try out my new DVD player. The proof of the pudding is in the eating, as we all know!* |
| **back to the salt mines** | Saying that you have to go *back to the sale mines* is a humorous way of talking about returning to work, usually with some reluctance. *We get two days off at Christmas and then it's back to the salt mines!* |
| **take with a grain of salt** | To say that certain information should be*taken with a grain of salt*means that you doubt its accuracy. *I hear the tuition fees are going to be reduced, but that should be taken with a grain of salt.* |
| **worth one's salt** | Someone who deserves respect because they do their job well is a person who is*worth their salt.*  *Any inspector worth their salt would have checked the papers carefully.* |
| **soup to nuts** | If you do something *from soup to nuts,* you do it all the way through, from the beginning to the end (like from the first to the last course of a meal). *She told us the whole story, from soup to nuts.* |
| **of the first water** | Something that is *of the first water* is of the finest or most exceptional quality (like being compared to a diamond). *The violinist gave a performance that was of the first water.* |
| **(not) hold water** | If an explanation or argument *does not hold water*, it does not stand up to critical examination and can be shown to be unfounded. *The reasons given for the government's new measures just do not hold water.* |
| **in hot water** | To say that somebody is*in hot water* means that they have done something wrong and people are angry with them. *Simon has been in hot water since his boss discovered that he had been using the internet for personal purposes.* |
| **water down** | If you *water down*something such as a report, declaration or proposal, you try to make it weaker or less likely to cause anger. *When announcing the rejection of the proposal, he tried to water down the committee's negative comments.* |
| **water off a duck's back** | Criticism or comments which have no effect on someone is referred to as being *''like water off a duck's back*'. *He's been warned of the dangers of smoking but it's like water off a duck's back.* |
| **water under the bridge** | If something difficult or unpleasant took place in the past but is no longer important, it is referred to as *water under the bridge.* *They had a serious disagreement in the past, but that's water under the bridge today.* |
| **make your mouth water** | Food can *make your mouth water*when it looks and smells extremely good. *That delicious smell from the kitchen is making my mouth water.* |
| **test the water(s)** | If you *test the water(s)*, you try to find out how acceptable or successful something is before becoming involved in it. *You should go to a gym class to test the water before enrolling.* |
| **tread water** | If you are *treading water,*your situation remains stationary in spite of your efforts, with no sign of any progress. *I've been treading water for the past year hoping to find a better job.* |
| **(can't) put new wine in old bottles** | This expression means that you should not try to combine new concepts or innovations with an old or long-established framework or system. *You'll never get that program to work on your father's old computer.  You can't put new wine in old bottles!* |

*English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions*

***Feelings - Emotions - Reactions***

(idioms, page 1 : bare your heart  → deep down )

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| **bare your heart (or soul) to someone** | If you *bare you heart* (or *soul*) to someone, you reveal your innermost thoughts and feelings to them. *Mike couldn't keep things to himself any longer. He decided to bare his soul to his best friend.* |
| **bear the brunt** | A person who *bears the brunt* of something is the one who suffers the most when something bad or unpleasant happens. *When things go wrong, his assistant always has to bear the brunt of his anger.* |
| **bent out of shape** | If you get *bent out of shape*, you become annoyed or upset about something that is usually not that important or cannot be avoided. *Don't get bent out of shape if you're delayed.  We'll wait for you.* |
| **beside yourself (with emotion)** | If you are *beside yourself* (with an emotion), you lose your self-control because of the intensity of the emotion you are feeling. *He was beside himself with grief when he lost his son.* |
| **bored to tears (also: to distraction/to death/silly)** | If you find something so dull and uninteresting that it makes you sad enough to cry, you are*bored to tears*. *I could see that my son was bored to tears by the historical documentary.* |
| **carry the torch for** | If you *carry the torch*, you have strong feelings for someone with whom you do not or cannot have a relationship. *He's been carrying the torch for Julie since their college days, before she married Ted.* |
| **wouldn't be caught/seen dead** | If someone says that they *wouldn't be caught or seen dead* in a particular place or doing something, they mean that they would be too ashamed or embarrassed. *My seven-year-old son thinks he's a big boy; he wouldn't be caught dead holding my hand in front of his friends!* |
| **cheesed off** | If someone is *cheesed off* with something, they are annoyed, bored or frustrated. *Jenny is absolutely cheesed off with her job.* |
| **chip on your shoulder** | If someone has a *chip on their shoulder*, the feel resentful because they feel they are being treated unfairly, especially because of their background, their sex or their colour. *He's got a chip on his shoulder because he's from a working-class family.* |
| **close to home** | If a remark or comment is*close to home*, it is so true, or it affects you so directly, that you feel uncomfortable. *Alan looks embarrassed.  Bob's comment must have been close to home.* |
| **come apart at the seams** | To say that someone is *coming apart at the seams* means that they are extremely upset or under severe mental stress. *Bob has had so many problems lately, he's coming apart at the seams.* |
| **cork up something** | If you *cork up* your feelings or emotions, you fail to show or express them. *It would be better if she showed her grief and didn't cork up her feelings.* |
| **cut to the quick** | If you *cut someone to the quick*, you hurt their feelings or offend them deeply. *Alan was cut to the quick when Joe expressed doubt about his sincerity.* |
| **deep down** | If you talk about how someone is, or feels, *deep down*, you are describing what they are like or what they really feel deep inside, behind the outward appearance. *He appears to be indifferent to his success, but deep down he's very happy.* |

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| **fish out of water** | If you feel*like a fish out of water*, you feel uncomfortable in unfamiliar surroundings. *As a non-golfer, I felt like a fish out of water at the clubhouse.* |
| **fit of pique** | Someone who reacts by showing their resentment or annoyance when their pride has been wounded, or they feel insulted, is said to have a*fit of pique.* *She left the table in a fit of pique.* |
| **Freudian slip** | A Freudian slip is a mistake made by a speaker which is considered to reveal their true thoughts or feelings. *So you got the job - I'm so sad ...  Sorry, I mean 'glad'!* |
| **have your heart in the right place** | A person who has their *heart in the right place*has kind feelings and good intentions, even if the results are not too good. *The old lady's cake wasn't wonderful but she's got her heart in the right place!* |
| **get a grip on yourself** | If you *get a grip on yourself,* you try to control your feelings so as to be able to deal with a situation. *After the initial shock, Lisa got a grip on herself and called an ambulance.* |
| **get something out of your system** | This expression means that you get rid of a strong emotion or desire by expressing it openly or trying to fulfill it. *Tell you parents how you feel - it's better to get it out of your system.* |
| **get worked up** | If you *get worked up* about something, you become upset, annoyed or excited, often unnecessarily. *It's his first day at school tomorrow and he's all worked up about it*. |
| **go bananas** | If someone becomes very emotional and starts behaving in a crazy way, they *go bananas.* *If you announce that you are going to drop out of school, your parents will go bananas!* |
| **go off the deep end** | If a person *goes off the deep end*, they become so angry or upset that they cannot control their emotions. *Eva will go off the deep end if her kids leave the kitchen in a mess again.* |
| **go to pieces** | If you *go to pieces,* for example after a terrible shock, you are so upset or distressed that you cannot lead a normal life. *Jack nearly went to pieces when his son died in a car crash.* |
| **groan inwardly** | If you *groan inwardly,* you feel like expressing despair, disapproval or distress, but you remain silent. *On his return, when Pete saw the pile of files on his desk, he groaned inwardly.* |
| **guilty pleasure** | Enjoying something which is not generally held in high regard, while at the same time feeling a bit guilty about it, is called a *guilty pleasure.* *Reading gossip magazines is a guilty pleasure for many women… and some men too!* |
| **hard as nails** | A person who is (as) *hard as nails* is unsentimental and shows no sympathy. *Don't expect any sympathy from him.  He's as hard as nails.* |
| **head over heels in love** | When a person falls passionately in love with another, they are said to be *head over heels in love*. *Tony's only interest at the moment is Maria.  He's head over heels in love with her!* |
| **change of *heart*** | If someone has a *change of heart*, they change their attitude or feelings, especially towards greater friendliness or cooperation. *He was against charity, but he had a change of heart when he saw the plight of the homeless.* |

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| **couldn't give a *hoot*!** | To say that you don't or couldn't *give a hoot* means that you don't care at all about something. *She wears eccentric clothes but she couldn't give a hoot about what others think.* |
| **hot under the collar** | If you get*hot under the collar,* you feel annoyed, indignant or embarrassed. *If anyone criticizes his proposals, Joe immediately gets hot under the collar.* |
| **keep a stiff upper lip** | If a person *keeps a stiff upper lip,* they contain their emotion and do not let other people see their feelings. *When she heard the bad news, she kept a stiff upper lip.* |
| **lick one's wounds** | When a person*licks their wonds*, they try to recover their confidence or spirits after a defeat, failure or disappointment. *Poor Harry is licking his wounds after being dropped from the team.* |
| **look on the bright side** | *If you look on the bright side, you view a mostly unpleasant situation in a positive and optimistic way and the see the favourable aspects. OK. You know nobody. But look on the bright side - you'll make lots of new friends!* |
| **love me, love my dog** | This expression means that if someone loves you, they must love everything about you, including everyone and everything you love. *Harry didn't like Sally's best friend, but Sally said : 'love me, love my dog!'* |
| **lump in your throat** | If you have *a lump in your throat,* you have a tight feeling in your throat because of a strong emotion such as sadness or gratitude. *The speech was so touching that I had a lump in my throat.* |
| **makes your ears burn** | If something *makes your ears burn,* you are embarrassed by what you hear, especially if the conversation is about you. *The comments I overheard made my ears burn.* |
| **makes your flesh crawl** | Something that *makes your flesh crawl* fills you with disgust or makes you feel very nervous. *Just talking about snakes makes my flesh crawl!* |
| **mixed feelings** | When you have *mixed feelings*about something, you react to it with conflicting emotions; you are happy and unhappy at the same time. *I had mixed feelings about leaving the company. I was excited about my new job but sad to be leaving my colleagues.* |
| **no hard feelings** | If you have *no hard feelings,* you feel no resentment or bitterness about something. *When Alan was promoted instead of Steve, he said to Steve : 'No hard feelings I  hope.'* |
| **not give a hang** | If you do not *give a hang* about something, you are totally indifferent to it and do not care at all about it. *I'm not interested in football so I don't give a hang about which team wins.* |
| **not turn a hair** | If someone *does not turn a hair,*they show no emotion in circumstances where a reaction is expected. *When the police came to arrest him, he didn't turn a hair.* |
| **nose out of joint** | If something puts *your nose out of joint,* it offends or annoys you. *When he discovered he wasn't on the invitation list,  that really put his nose out of joint!* |

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| **open/reopen old wounds** | If you*open or reopen old wounds* you revive memories of an unpleasant event, situation or dispute that took place in the past. *He carefully avoided the subject so as not to open old wounds.* |
| **pour your heart out** | If you*pour your heart out* to someone, you express your feelings freely. *When she needs to pour her heart out to someone, Elsa goes to visit her grandmother*. |
| **proud as a peacock** | A person who is as *proud as a peacock* is extremely proud. *When his son won first prize, Bill was as proud as a peacock.* |
| **proud/pleased as punch** | Someone who is as *proud or pleased as punch* is delighted or feels very satisfied about something. *Dad was as proud as punch when he won the tennis match.* |
| **put foot in mouth** | If you *put your foot in your mouth,* you say something that offends, upsets or embarrasses someone. *She really put her foot in her mouth when she mentioned the housewarming party - Andy hadn't been invited.* |
| **reduce to tears** | If your behaviour or attitude makes someone cry, you*red*uce them to tears. *The teacher criticized her presentation so harshly that she was reduced to tears.* |
| **regain one's composure** | If you*regain your composure,* you calm down and control your emotions again after a stressful or upsetting event. *It took her a while to regain her composure after hearing the insulting remarks.* |
| **save face** | When someone*saves face,* they manage to avoid humiliation or embarrassment and preserve their dignity and the respect of others. *They allowed him to save face by accepting  his resignation.* |
| **have a *soft spot*** | If you*have a soft spot*for someone or something, you particularly like them. *My grandfather has always had a soft spot for his first grandchild.* |
| **speak volumes** | If something *speaks volumes*, it expresses a reaction or opinion very clearly, with no need for words. *The happy smile on the child's face when he opened the box spoke volumes about my choice of gift.* |
| **let off steam** | A person who*lets off steam* releases surplus energy or strong feelings either through intense physical activity or by talking in an unrestrained manner. *Let's bring the kids to the playground so they can let off steam.* |
| **steamed up** | If someone *gets steamed up* about something, they become very angry, excited or enthusiastic about it. *Calm down - there's no need to get all steamed up about it!* |
| **in a stew** | When someone is*in a stew*about something, they are worried and agitated. *When she was organizing the wedding reception, Laura got into a stew over the seating arrangements.* |
| **a stitherum** | Someone who is (all)*in a stitherum* is excited, agitated or confused about something. *The mayor's resignation created quite a stitherum in the town.* |

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| **strike a raw nerve** | If something you say *strikes or hits a raw nerve,* it upsets someone because they are very sensitive about the subject. *You struck a raw nerve when you mentioned divorce. They're separating.* |
| **swallow one's pride** | If you *swallow your pride,*you accept something humiliating or embarrassing, for example having to admit that you are wrong, or that you have less knowledge that you thought. *When Jill failed the exam, she had to swallow her pride and repeat the course.* |
| **sweet nothings** | Pleasant but unimportant words that lovers say to each other are called *sweet nothings.* *He whispered sweet nothings in her ear as they danced.* |
| **take a fancy** | If you*take a fancy* to someone or something, you develop a fondness for them or begin to like them. *I think Paul has taken a fancy to the new intern!* |
| **take a load/weight off your mind** | If something *takes a load*(or *weight*) *off someone's mind,* it brings great relief because a problem has been solved. *When the company closed down, finding a new job took a load off Tom's mind.* |
| **tear your hair out** | If someone is*tearing their hair out,* they are extremely agitated or distressed about something. *I've been tearing my hair out all morning trying to find the error!* |
| **on tenterhooks** | A person who is*on tenterhooks* is in a state of anxious suspense or excitement. *The candidate were kept on tenterhooks for hours while the panel deliberated.* |
| **thank one's lucky stars** | *When someone says they can thank their lucky stars, they are expressing heartfelt gratitude or feeling particularly fortunate. I can thank my lucky stars I wasn't on the train that crashed.* |
| **think the sun rises and sets on someone** | If you consider someone to be the most wonderful person in the world, you*think the sun rises and sets on* them. *She adores her husband - she thinks the sun rises and sets on him!* |
| **think the world of** | If you*think the world of someone,* you like or admire them very much. *She's a wonderful grandmother - the children think the world of her.* |
| **thinly veiled** | If something such as a feeling or reaction is*thinly veiled,* it is barely hidden. *His disappointment was thinly veiled when he saw what he had won.* |
| **tongue-tied** | If you are*tongue-tied,*you have difficulty in expressing yourself because you are nervous or embarrassed. *At the start of the interview I was completely tongue-tied!* |
| **tug at the heartstrings** | Something or someone who*tugs at the heartstrings* causes others to feel a great deal of pity or sadness. *The hospital's plea for donors tugged at the heartstrings of millions of viewers.* |
| **over the moon** | If you are*over the moon,*you are absolutely delighted. *We were all over the moon when we heard the good news.* |
| **weak at the knees** | Someone who is *weak at the knees*is (temporarily) barely able to stand because of emotion, fear or illness. *The shock of the announcement make me go weak at the knees!* |
| **wear your heart on your sleeve** | If you *wear your heart on your sleeve,*you allow others to see your emotions or feelings. *You could see that she was hurt - she wears her heart on her sleeve!* |
| **wish the ground would swallow you up** | When you are so embarrassed by something that you would like to disappear, you *wish the ground would swallow you up.*  *When I realized I was reading the wrong report, I stood there in front of the group wishing the ground would swallow me up!* |
| **be/mean the world to someone** | When you *are* or *mean the world to* someone, you are very important or precious to them. *His daughter means all the world to Mr. Jones.* |
| **written all over face** | When someone's feelings or thoughts are very clear, you can say that they are*written all over their face.* *Her affection for her grandson was written all over the old lady's face.* |

*English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions*

(idioms :    ants in one's pants  →  raring to go)

***Enthusiasm - Eagerness - Motivation***

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| **ants in one's pants** | People who have*ants in their pants* are very restless or excited about something.  *I wish he'd relax. He's got ants in his pants about something today.* |
| **with bells on** | If you go somewhere*with bells on*, you are delighted and eager to go there. *Of course I'll be there - with bells on!* |
| **bounce off the walls** | Someone who is very excited about something, or full of nervous energy, is said to be*bouncing off the walls.* *Danny can't wait to start his new job.  He's bouncing off the walls.* |
| **bright-eyed and bushy-tailed** | A person who is *bright-eyed and bushy-tailed* is very enthusiastic and full of energy. *Gary was fantastic. He arrived bright-eyed and bushy-tailed at 7am and worked with us all day*. |
| **cause a stir** | If something *causes a stir*, it creates an atmosphere of excitement or great interest. *The arrival of the actress caused quite a stir in the village.* |
| **champ at the bit** | Someone who is*champing at the bit* is ready and eager to start an activity, and is showing impatience at being delayed. *The press conference was delayed for such a long time that the journalists were champing at the bit.* |
| **dial it back** | If you*dial it back*, you reduce the intensity of something, or tone it down. *When Lucas started getting all excited, his mother said : Hey Lucas, dial it back a bit!* |
| **do nothing by halves** | When a person does everything they are engaged in completely and thoroughly, they are said to*do nothing by halves. When she cooks, it's a four-course meal - she does nothing by halves!* |
| **eager beaver** | The term*eager beaver* refers to a person who is hardworking and enthusiastic, sometimes considered overzealous. *The new accountant works all the time -  first to arrive and last to leave. He's a real eager beaver!* |
| **eat, sleep and breathe something** | If you *eat, sleep and breathe* something, you are so enthusiastic and passionate about it that you think about it constantly. *He's an enthusiastic golfer;  he eats, sleeps and breathes it!* |
| **edge of one's seat** | Someone who is *on the edge of their seat*is very interested in something and finds it both extremely exciting and nerve-wracking. *Look at Bob! He's on the edge of his seat watching that rugby match!* |
| **fever pitch** | If a situation or feeling reaches*fever pitch,* it becomes very intense and exciting. *Reaction to the affair has reached fever pitch all over the country.* |
| **fling yourself into** | If you*fling yourself into* an activity, you do it with a lot of energy and enthusiasm. *Ever since she flung herself in the anti-pollution campaign, she rarely has a free moment!* |
| **go the extra mile** | If you *go the extra mile,* you do more than what is expected of you. *You can count on Tom; he's always willing to go the extra mile.* |
| **hold your horses** | If you tell someone to *hold their horses*, you think they are doing something too fast and should slow down and not rush into further action. *Hold your horses! We need to get the customer's approval first!.* |
| **lick/smack your lips** | A person who is*licking (*or *smacking) their lips* is showing that they are excited about something and are eager for it to happen. *He was licking his lips at the idea of the money he was going to make.* |
| **put your heart (and soul) into** | If you *put your heart (and soul) into something*, you are very enthusiastic and invest a lot of energy and hard work in it. *Paul was determined to make a success of the project.  He put his heart and soul into it.* |
| **raring to go** | If someone is*raring to go*, they are very eager and enthusiastic about the idea of doing something. *The kids can't wait to go camping.  They're raring to go!* |
| **run out of *steam*** | If you say that a person, a process or an organised event is *running out of steam,* you mean that there is a loss of impetus, energy or enthusiasm. *The anti-immigrant movement seems to be running out of steam.* |

*English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions*

***Employment - Jobs***

(idioms, page 1 :   at all costs  → golden handcuffs)

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| **above and beyond the call of duty** | If a person does something which is*above and beyond the call of duty*, they show a greater degree of courage or effort than is usually required or expected in their job. *The fire-fighter received a medal for his action which went above and beyond the call of duty.* |
| **back-room boys** | This term refers to people who do important work but have no contact with the public. *Back-room boys don't always receive the credit they deserve for their work.* |
| **brain drain** | The departure of highly qualified people (scientists, engineers, etc.) for other countries, where they have better opportunities and usually better pay, is called*the brain drain.* |
| **busman's holiday** | A *busman's holiday* is when you spend your spare time or your holidays doing the same sort of activity as you do in your job. *My husband is a chef, so for him time off with the family is often a busman's holiday!* |
| **cream of the crop** | This expression refers to the best people or things in a particular group. *As usual, the cream of the crop of this year's graduates were offered the best jobs.* |
| **dead wood** | The term *dead wood*refers to people or things which are no longer considered useful or necessary. *The new manager wants to reduce costs by cutting out the dead wood.* |
| **on the dole** | A person who receives financial assistance from the government when they are unemployed is *on the dole.* *Their father is on the dole so the family is living on a tight budget.* |
| **dream ticket** | If you refer to two people as a*dream ticket*, you think they would work well together and be successful. *Two world champions teaming up for the children's fund-raising project would be a dream ticket.* |
| **duty bound** | If you are *duty bound* to do something, you are required to do it as part of your obligations. *Teachers are duty bound to report a pupil's absence from school.* |
| **earn while you learn** | This expression refers to the possibility of earning a salary while in training. *Become an apprentice and get paid while in training.  Earn while you learn!* |
| **firing line** | Someone who is in the*firing line* is in a position to be criticized because of their responsibilities or the position they hold. *The managing director of the bank is in the firing line since the fraud was discovered.* |
| **get the axe** | If someone*gets the axe*, they lose their job. *When a company is restructured, the senior staff are often the first to get the axe.* |
| **golden handcuffs** | The term *golden handcuffs* refers to a large sum of money or a generous financial arrangement granted to an executive as an incentive to stay in their job, or to ensure long-term cooperation after their departure. |

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| **golden handshake** | A *golden handshake* is a generous sum of money given to a person when they leave a company or retire (sometimes given to encourage early retirement). |
| **golden parachute** | A*golden parachute* is a clause in an executive's employment contract stating that the executive will receive certain large benefits if their employment is terminated. |
| **glass ceiling** | This term refers to a discriminatory barrier perceived by women and minorities that prevents them from rising to positions of power or responsibility. *Claire knew she would never break the glass ceiling and rise to a senior management position*. |
| **hang up one's boots** | When a sports player *hangs up their boots*, they stop playing and retire. (This expression is often used to refer to retirement in general.) *Dad says he's going to hang up his boots at the end of the year.* |
| **number cruncher** | This is a humorous way of referring to someone who is an accountant or who is very good at working with numbers and calculations. *She's a number cruncher who perfectly understands the organisation's financial situation.* |
| **learn the ropes** | If you*learn the ropes,* you learn how to do a particular job correctly. *He's bright.  It won't take him long to learn the ropes.* |
| **paid peanuts** | If you are*paid peanuts,* you have a very low salary. *Jenny has a very interesting job, but she's paid peanuts.* |
| **play second fiddle** | If you *play second fiddle*to another person, you accept to be second in importance to that person, or have a lower position. *John resented having to play second fiddle to the sales manager when the company was restructured.* |
| **plum job** | A desirable position which is well-paid and considered relatively easy is called *a plum job.* *Ideally he'd like to find himself a plum job in New York.* |
| **pound the pavement** | Someone who *pounds the pavement* walks the streets or goes from company to company, usually in search of employment. (You can also pound the pavement in an effort to raise funds or gain support for a cause.) *Charlie is out there pounding the pavement since he lost his job.* |
| **put out to pasture** | To say that someone has been*put out to pasture* means that they have been forced to retire or give up their responsibilities. *He's in good health and he feels it's too early to be put out to pasture.* |
| **be *sacked*/get the *sack*** | If someone *is sacked* or *gets the sack*, they lose their job, usually because they have done something wrong. *Charlie got the sack when his boss caught him stealing.* |
| **separate sheep from goats** | If you *separate the sheep from the goats,* you examine a group of people and decide which are suitable and which are not. *Examining job applications is the first stage in separating the sheep from the goats.* |

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| **shape up or ship out** | This expression is used to warn someone that if they do not improve, they will have to leave their job. *When Tom started neglecting the customers, he was told to shape up or ship out.* |
| **show someone the ropes** | If you *show someone the ropes,* you teach or explain to them how to do a particular job. *The manager is busy showing the ropes to two new trainees.* |
| **another *string* to your bow** | If you have*another string to your bow,* you have another skill or possible course of action if everything else fails. *As well as her excellent qualifications, she's got another string to her bow to help her find a job.  She speaks fluent Chinese.* |
| **tricks of the trade** | This term refers to a clever or expert way of doing things, especially in a job. *He's a tough negotiator;  he knows all the tricks of the trade.* |
| **waiting in the wings** | If someone is *waiting in the wings,* they are waiting for an opportunity to take action, especially to replace someone else in their job or position. *There are many young actors waiting in the wings ready to show their talent.* |
| **walking papers** | If you are given your*walking papers,* your contract or a relationship has ended. *After causing a diplomatic incident, Carter got his walking papers.* |
| **work to rule** | During a conflict, when employees decide to do only the minimum amount of work required by company rules, and refuse any overtime, etc., they *work to rule.* *In protest against the new measures, the employees decided to work to rule.* |
| **worth one's salt** | Someone who deserves respect because they do their job well is a person who is*worth their salt.*  *Any inspector worth their salt would have checked the papers carefully.* |
| **xerox subsidy** | This term refers to the habit of using the photocopier at work for personal use. *A certain percentage of photocopies are in fact xerox subsidies.* |

*English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions*

***Efficiency - Competence***

(idioms, page 1  :  acid test  →  do the trick)

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| **acid test** | To refer to something as'*the acid test*' means that it will prove how effective or useful something is. *The training course was very interesting but the acid test will come when I start my new job.* |
| **(whole) bag of tricks** | If you use your (whole) bag of tricks to do something, you try (all) the clever methods you know in order to succeed. *Let's call on George and his bag of tricks; maybe he can help us solve the problem.* |
| **on the ball** | If you are *on the ball*, you are aware of what is happening and are able to deal with things quickly and intelligently. *We need someone who is really on the ball to head the fund-raising campaign.* |
| **to the best of one's ability** | When someone does something *to the best of their ability*, they do it as well as they possibly can. *I felt nervous all through the interview, but I replied to the best of my ability.* |
| **kill two birds with one stone** | If you*kill two birds with one stone*, you succeed in doing two things at the same time. *By studying on the train on the way home, Claire kills two birds with one stone.* |
| **boil the ocean** | To “boil the ocean” means to waste time on a task or project that is unnecessary, not worth doing or impossible to achieve. *“I expect you to do the job well but don’t try to boil the ocean!”* |
| **take the bull by the horns** | To take*the bull by the horns* means that a person decides to act decisively in order to deal with a difficult situation or problem. *When the argument turned into a fight, the bar owner took the bull by the horns and called the police.* |
| **can't hold a candle to** | If one person *can't hold a candle* to another, they are much less competent or do not perform as well as the other. *John is very intelligent but he can't hold a candle to his brother Paul when it comes to sports.* |
| **chase your (own) tail** | Someone who is*chasing their (own) tail* is spending a lot of time and energy doing many things but achieving very little. *He's been chasing his tail all week collecting data but the report is still  not ready.* |
| **like clockwork** | To say that someone or something goes, runs or behaves*like clockwork* means that everything happens exactly as expected. *Meals are always served on time.  In their home everything runs like clockwork.* |
| **cut the ground from under feet** | When someone *cuts the ground from under another's feet*, they do something which weakens their position or spoils their plans. *When we launched the new product, we cut the ground from under our competitors' feet.* |
| **dab hand at something** | If you're a *dab hand at something*, you're very good at doing it. *Why don't you call Suzy? She's a dab hand at organizing barbecues.* |
| **deliver the goods** | If a person *delivers the goods*, they do what is expected of them or what they have promised to. *Let's hope that new whiz-kid the boss hired can deliver the goods!* |
| **do nothing by halves** | When a person does everything they are engaged in completely and thoroughly, they are said to*do nothing by halves. When she cooks, it's a four-course meal - she does nothing by halves!* |
| **do the trick** | If something *does the trick*, it does exactly what is needed, or achieves the desired effect. *Another coat of paint should do the trick.* |

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| **explore all avenues** | If you *explore all avenues*, you try out every possibility in order to obtain a result or find a solution. *We can't say it's impossible until we've explored all avenues.* |
| **fast track something** | If you decide to*fast track something*, such as a task or project, you give it high priority so that the objective is reached as quickly as possible. *In view of the number of homeless, it was decided to fast track the construction of low-cost housing.* |
| **fine-tooth comb** | To go over something with a*fine-tooth comb*means to examine it closely and thoroughly so as not to miss any details. *The police are examining the scene of the crime with a fine-tooth comb.* |
| **get it down to a fine art** | When you learn to do something perfectly, you *get it down to a fine art.* *Entertaining her husband's business associates is not a problem for Jane;  she's got that down to a fine art!* |
| **get one's act together** | If you *get your act together,* you organise your affairs better than you have done previously and deal with things more efficiently. *Jack's plan won't work unless he gets his act together.* |
| **get off the ground** | If you*get something off the ground,*you put it into operation after having organised it. *After a lot of hard work, we finally got the campaign off the ground.* |
| **get ducks in a row** | If you *get your ducks in a row,* you get things well organised. *We need to get our ducks in a row if we want our project to succeed.* |
| **get the show on the road** | If you manage to put a plan or idea into action, you *get the show on the road.* *OK, we've got all we need, so let's get the show on the road.* |
| **go the extra mile** | If you *go the extra mile,* you do more than what is expected of you. *You can count on Tom; he's always willing to go the extra mile.* |
| **go to (great) pains (or lengths)** | When trying to achieve something, if you *go to great pains*or*great lengths*, you do everything that is possible in order to succeed. *The two parties went to great lengths to reach an agreemen*t. |
| **half the battle** | This expression refers to a significant part of the effort or work needed to achieve something. *We've already obtained a loan for the project - that's half the battle!* |
| **think on your feet** | A person who *thinks on their feet* is capable of adjusting rapidly to new developments and making quick decisions,  *Good lawyers need to be able to think on their feet when pleading a case.* |
| **not let grass grow under feet** | If someone does*not let the grass grow under their feet,* they do not delay in getting something done. *As soon as he received the permit, he started to build.  He never lets the grass grow under his feet!* |
| **keep your fingers on the pulse** | If you *keep a finger on the pulse*, you are constantly aware of the most recent events or developments. *A successful investor keeps his finger on the pulse of international business.* |
| **kill two birds with one stone** | If you*kill two birds with one stone*, you succeed in doing two things at the same time. *By studying on the train on the way home, Claire kills two birds with one stone.* |

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| **leave no stone unturned** | If you try everything possible in order to achieve or to find something, you*leave no stone unturned.* *The management left no stone unturned in their efforts to find a solution to the crisis.* |
| **make light work of** | If a person *makes light work of*something, they do it very easily or with little effort. *The boys made light work of the cleaning up.  The house was spotless in no time.* |
| **mean business** | If someone*means business,* they are serious about what they announce. *The boss says that in future any missing material will be reported to the police, and he looks as though he means business.* |
| **ahead of the pack** | If a person or organisation is *ahead of the pack*, they are better or more successful than their rivals. *Our products will have to be more innovative if we want to stay ahead of the pack.* |
| **run a taut ship (also: a *tight*ship)** | When a group or organisation is run in a well-ordered and disciplined manner, the person in charge*runs a tau*t (or *tight*) *ship*. *The director of the scout camp runs a taut ship.* |
| **sail through something** | If you*sail through something*, for example a test or presentation, you succeed in doing it without difficulty. *Demonstrating the new product was no problem for Pedro. He sailed through it.* |
| **sell ice to Eskimos** | This expression is used to describe a person who has the ability to persuade someone to accept something totally unnecessary or useless.  *It's not surprising he was named 'salesman of the year'. He could sell ice to Eskimos!* |
| **take matters into your own hands** | If you*take matters into your hand*s, you take action yourself rather than waiting for others to intervene. *When Susan saw the lack of progress, she decided to take matters into her own hands.* |
| **tricks of the trade** | This term refers to a clever or expert way of doing things, especially in a job. *He's a tough negotiator;  he knows all the tricks of the trade.* |
| **tried and tested** | If a method has been*tried and tested,* it can be trusted because it has been used successfully in the past and is known to work. *There's no risk involved. The method has been tried and tested.* |
| **walk and chew gum** | If you can *walk and chew gum* (at the same time), you are able to do more than one thing at a time. (This expression is often used negatively to indicate incompetence) *Why did you hire that guy?  He can't walk and chew gum at the same time!* |
| **ways and means** | To say that there are *ways and means* of achieving something means that there are several methods which will produce the desired result. *All ways and means wil be used to provide assistance to the survivors.* |
| **work like a charm** | If something such as a product or method*works like a charm,* it functions very well or has the desired effect. *I tried cleaning it with vinegar and it worked like a charm!* |

*English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions*

***Descriptions of places - things - events***

(page 1:  act of God  → dead as a dodo)

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| **act of God** | This term refers to an natural event or accident, for which no person is responsible (such as an earthquake, lightning and similar acts of nature). *The insurance company refused to pay for the damage because it was caused by an act of God.* |
| **been through the wars** | If something has *been in or through the wars*, it show signs of rough treatment or damage. *He arrived in a car that looked as though it had been through the wars.* |
| **beyond recall** | Something which is *beyond recall* is impossible to retrieve, cancel or reverse. *I'm afraid we can't recover the pictures - your camera is beyond recall.* |
| **beyond redemption** | If something is *beyond redemption*, it is in such a poor state that there is no hope of improvement or recovery. *With the latest scandal, his reputation is now beyond redemption.* |
| **bodice-ripper** | A novel, usually on a historical theme, with a plot that involves romantic passion between a vulnerable heroine and a rich, powerful male character, is called a*bodice-ripper. The novel is a bodice-ripper set in the French revolution.* |
| **broad strokes** | If something is described or defined with/in *broad strokes*, it is outlined in a very general way, without any details. *In a few broad strokes he summed up the situation.* |
| **clean as a whistle** | Something*as clean as a whistle* is extremely clean. This can also mean that a person's criminal record is clean. *Bob spent the afternoon washing and shining his car until it was as clean as a whistle.* |
| **collecting dust** | If something is *collecting dus*t, it hasn't been touched or used for a long period of time. *My dad doesn't play golf any more.  His clubs are collecting dust now.* |
| **come in handy** | To say that something may *come in handy* means that it may be useful some time or other. *Don't throw away those old shelves; they may come in handy one day.* |
| **copper-bottomed** | To describe something such as a plan, a contract or a financial arrangement as *copper-bottomed* means that it is completely safe or reliable. *He signed a copper-bottomed agreement with a distributor.* |
| **creature comforts** | This expression refers to modern conveniences (such as hot water or central heating) that make life comfortable and pleasant. *I need my creature comforts. I don't know how I'd survive without air-conditioning in this climate!* |
| **(a) cut above** | Something which is *a cut above* everything else is better or of higher quality. *The articles in this magazine are a cut above the others.* |
| **cut and dried** | If you refer to a situation, problem or solution as *cut and dried,* you mean that it is clear and straightforward with no likely complications. *When the new manager arrived, he didn't find the situation as cut and dried as he had expected.* |
| **dead as a dodo** | To say that something is (as) *dead as a dodo* means that it is unquestionably dead or obsolete, or has gone out of fashion. ***(A dodo is a bird that is now extinct.)*** *The floppy disk is an invention that is now (as) dead as a dodo.* |

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| **dead as a doornail** | This expression is used to stress that something is very definitely dead or no longer exists. *They've started fighting again, so the peace agreement is now as dead as a doornail.* |
| **dog and pony show** | A *dog and pony show* is a marketing event or presentation which has plenty of style but not much content. |
| **dog's breakfast** | To describe something as a*dog's breakfast* means that it is a complete mess. *The new secretary made a dog's breakfast out of the filing system.* |
| **doggie bag** | A bag provided by a restaurant so that you can take the leftover food home with you is called a *doggie* (or *doggy*) *bag*. *The portions were so big that I decided to ask for a doggie bag* |
| **fait accompli** | This French expression refers to something that has been done and cannot be changed. *He used his savings to buy a motorbike and then presented his parents with a fait accompli.* |
| **falls between two stools** | If something*falls between two stools*, it is neither totally one thing nor another, and is therefore unsatisfactory. *The book didn't sell because it fell between two stools.  It appealed neither to historians nor to the general public.* |
| **few and far between** | Items, places or events which are*few and far between*are rarely found or do not happen very often. *Restaurants in this part of the country are few and far betwee*n. |
| **(of the) first water** | Something that is*of the first water*is of the finest or most exceptional quality (like being compared to a diamond). *The violinist gave a performance that was of the first water.* |
| **fit the bill** | If someone or something*fits the bill*, they are exactly right for a particular situation. *They wanted a quiet place to stay and the country inn fitted the bill.* |
| **fit for purpose** | Something that is suitable for a particular function and is fully operational is said to be*fit for purpose.* *The mayor promised that the new leisure centre would be ready on time and fit for purpose.* |
| **flag of convenience** | If a ship, boat or yacht sails under a*flag of convenience*, it is registered in a foreign country in order to avoid regulations and taxes, and reduce operating costs. |
| **fly-by-night** | A*fly-by-night*person, business or venture is considered untrustworthy because they operate briefly and disappear overnight *I bought it in one of those fly-by-night stores and now I can't exchange it.  The place has closed down.* |
| **for the birds** | If you describe something as*for the birds*, you consider it to be uninteresting, useless or not to be taken seriously. *As far as I'm concerned, his theory is for the birds.* |
| **free-for-all** | This term refers to an uncontrolled situation such as a discussion, argument or fight where everyone present can do or say whatever they like. *It started as a serious debate but turned into a free-for-all.* |
| **freudian slip** | A Freudian slip is a mistake made by a speaker which is considered to reveal their true thoughts or feelings. *So you got the job - I'm so sad ...  Sorry, I mean 'glad'!* |

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| **gizmo** | The term *'gizmo'*refers to a gadget or any small technological item which is unusual or novel, and for which the proper term is unknown or forgotten. |
| **going downhill** | When something *goes downhill*, it deteriorates or gets worse little by little. *His health has been going downhill since the last operation.* |
| **going to hell in a handcart** | If something is *going to hell in a handcart,* it is in a bad state and continues to deteriorate. *This used to be a nice place to live but now the area is going to hell in a handcart.* |
| **going to rack and ruin** | If something *is going to rack and ruin*, it is falling into very bad condition because of lack of care. *When the factory closed down, the building went to rack and ruin.* |
| **gutter press** | This term refers to newspapers that print a lot of sensational stories about people's private lives. *Of course the gutter press was quick to print a sensational version of the incident!* |
| **hard and fast** | Something which is*hard and fast*is inflexible or cannot be altered. *Unfortunately there are no hard and fast rules related to English spelling.* |
| **hard to come by** | Something that is*hard to come by* is rare or difficult to find. *Experienced carpenters are hard to come by these days.* |
| **hard to swallow** | When something is difficult to accept or believe, it is *hard to swallow.* *She invented an excuse that the teacher found hard to swallow.* |
| **here today, gone tomorrow** | This is said of something which appears and disappears very quickly, or does not last long, *The shops in this area change very often - here today, gone tomorrow.* |
| **hive of activity** | A place where there are lots of things happening, and everyone is very busy, is called *a hive of activity. When I went to offer help, the kitchen was already a hive of activity.* |
| **hollow victory** | A victory obtained in unsatisfactory conditions, which as a result seems worthless or without significance for the winner, is called a *hollow victory.* *Won in the absence of the major ski champions, his gold medal was a hollow victory.* |
| **household name** | When the name of something becomes very familiar because it is so often used, it is called a *household name* or*word*. *The product was so successful that its name became a household word  in no time.* |
| **hustle and bustle** | This term refers to busy energetic activity in an atmosphere of general excitement. *I prefer to live in the country. I hate the hustle and bustle of city life.* |
| **icing on the cake** | If something is referred to as *icing on the cake*, it is an extra benefit that makes a good situation even better. *Good news!  I get the job ... and the icing on the cake is that I get a company car too!* |

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| **idiot box** | Some people consider television to lack educational value and refer to it as the*idiot box.* *He spends all his free time in front of the idiot box.* |
| **in keeping with** | If something is *in keeping with*, for example, a style or tradition, it is suitable or appropriate in a particular situation. *We exchange presents at Christmas in keeping with tradition.* |
| **in mint condition** | Something that is*in mint condition* is in such perfect condition that it looks new or as good as new. *The car is 10 years old but according to Tom it's in mint condition.* |
| **in tatters** | Something that is badly torn, in very poor condition or damaged beyond repair is*in tatters. His reputation is in tatters after the latest scandal.* |
| **in inverted commas** | When describing something, if you use a word which you say is 'in inverted commas', you indicate that the word is not quite true or appropriate. *We were served a 'meal', in inverted commas, but we were too hungry to complain.* |
| **industrial strength** | This is a humorous way of referring to something which is very strong, powerful or concentrated. *I've got an industrial-strength headache this morning!* |
| **just the ticket** | If something is*just the ticket*, it is exactly right, or just what you need. *I'm not hungry enough for a meal.  A bowl of soup would be just the ticket.* |
| **last word** | Something described as*the last word* is the most recent or most fashionable in its category. *Steve's new computer is the last word in technology.* |
| **less is more** | This expression, used particularly in architecture and design, conveys the idea that things that are simple in style and smaller in size are better. *Simplicity is fashionable today.  Less is more.* |
| **light years ahead** | If something is*light years ahead*, it is far more advanced in tems of development or progress. *We've got to invest more in research - our competitors' new product is  light years ahead!* |
| **lives up to reputation** | If something *lives up to its reputation*,  it is as good, or as bad, as people say. *The guesthouse lived up to its reputation; the owners were as friendly and hospitable as we had been told.* |
| **middle of nowhere** | If a place is*in the middle of nowhere*, it is in a remote area, far from towns, villages or houses. *The campsite was in the middle of nowhere so I couldn't send you a postcard.* |
| **middle of the road (MOR)** | This term refers to anything moderate, unadventurous or inoffensive that avoids extremes and appeals to the majority of people. *It's a middle-of-the-road restaurant that's ideal for families.* |
| **mixed blessing** | Something pleasant which also has disadvantages is called a *mixed blessing.* *He inherited as 18th century mansion but the maintenance costs make it a mixed blessing.* |

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| **name written on it** | If something *has someone's name (written) on it,*it is intended for that person or it is ideally suited to them. *That dress would be perfect for you - it's got your name on it!* |
| **next best thing** | If you can't have exactly what you want, the *next best thing* is the best alternative possible. *The camera I wanted was far too expensive so I opted for a cheaper one that was the next best thing.* |
| **not a patch on** | If something or someone is *not a patch on* an other, they are not nearly as good. *His second conference wasn't a patch on the first one.* |
| **not in the same league** | If something is *not in the same league,* it is of much lower standard than something else. *He had a good voice but he wasn't in the same league as Pavarotti.* |
| **not up to par** | If something is*not up to par,* it does not meet the required standard. *He didn't get the job because his English wasn't up to par.* |
| **not up to scratch** | Something which is *not up to scratch*fails to reach the expected standard. *The quality of the material is not up to scratch.  We'll have to change our suppliers.* |
| **a notch above** | Something that is*a notch above* something else is a little better in every way. *His rendering of the song was a notch above the others.* |
| **odds and ends** | *Odds and ends* are small articles, or bits and pieces of all sorts, usually of little value. *I keep my odds and ends in this drawer.* |
| **over the top (OTT)** | Something which is*over the top* is totally excessive or not suitable for the occasion. *Her dramatic speech was way over the top.* |
| **pie in the sky** | If an idea or project is *pie in the sky,* it is completely unrealistic or unlikely to be achieved. *The promise of low-cost housing for everyone turned out to be pie in the sky.* |
| **the pits** | If something is referred to as *the pits,* it is considered to be absolutely the worst. *That magazine is the pits!* |
| **recipe for disaster** | If you refer to a plan or idea as *a recipe for disaster,*you think it is likely to produce bad results. *Our two families together for Christmas? Sounds like a recipe for disaster!* |
| **red light district** | An area of a town or city where there is a concentration of sex shops, prostitution, strip clubs, etc. is known as the*red light district.* *A photograph of the politician taken in a red-light district caused a scandal.* |
| **right up your alley** | If something is*right up your alley,*it is the sort of thing you like or have knowledge about. *You like cooking do you?  This book will be right up your alley.* |
| **a rip-off** | To say that something is*a rip-off*means that it costs much more than it should. *$10 for an orange juice?  That's a rip-off!* |

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| **second to none** | Something that is *second to none* is excellent or much better than any other. *The service was perfect and the food was second to none.* |
| **seen better days** | If something has*seen better days,*it has aged visibly in comparison with when it was new. *My much-travelled suitcase has seen better days!* |
| **set in stone** | When something is *set in stone*, it is permanent and cannot be changed in any way. *The agenda isn't set in stone;  we can add an item if need be.* |
| **(comes in) all shapes and sizes** | Something that can be found in many different forms, types or varieties, *comes in all shapes and sizes.* *Computers come in all shapes and sizes nowadays.* |
| **small potatoes** | Something that is*small potatoes* is considered unimportant or insignificant. *Her first publication was considered small potatoes but her new book has lead to a change of opinion.* |
| **snail mail** | This term refers to the standard system of mail delivery, or postal service, considered very slow compared to electronic mail. *More and more people are using e-mail rather than the traditional postal service, snail mail.* |
| **stand the test of time** | If something *stands the test of time*, people continue to find it valuable or useful after many years. *The teaching method has stood the test of time.  It is still used in schools today.* |
| **stick out a mile** | If something *sticks out a mile,* it is very obvious or very easy to see. *You can see she's had a facelift - it sticks out a mile!* |
| **stink to high heaven** | If something has a very strong unpleasant smell, it *stinks to high heaven.* *Take off those socks - they stink to high heaven!* |
| **streets ahead** | To say that something is*streets ahead* of something else means that it is much better or more advanced. *In measures to preserve the planet, the Scandinavians are streets ahead of us.* |
| **sublime to ridiculous** | If something goes*from the sublime to the ridiculous,*it deteriorates in quality from serious or admirable to absurd or unimportant. *An opera followed by a Mr.Muscle contest is going from the sublime to the ridiculous!* |
| **ticks all the right boxes** | If something *ticks all the right boxes,* it is perfect for you because it meets all your criteria. *We're in luck!  We visited an apartment today that ticks all the right boxes!* |
| **top notch** | To say that something is *top notch*means that it is of the highest possible quality or standard. *The hotel was wonderful and the service was top notch.* |
| **tough as old boots** | If something, specially meat, is *(as) tough as old boots*, it is hard to cut and difficult to chew.  (This can also refer to a person who is strong either physically or in character.) *I was served a steak as tough as old boots.* |
| **up/down one's alley** | If something is*(right) up or down your alley,* it is exactly the sort of thing that will suit your tastes or abilities. *Alex loves reading, so a job in a bookshop is right up his alley.* |
| **up-to-the-minute** | Something that is *up-to-the-minute* is the very latest or most recent version available. *The internet is the best place to find up-to-the-minute news.* |
| **the works** | Something that has*the works*contains everything that is possible, or the full range of options. *The first thing he did was order a new computer with the works.* |
| **worth its weight in gold** | Someone or something that is *worth their weight in gold* is considered to be of great value. *We couldn't run the farm without him.  He's worth his weight in gold.* |

# *English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions*

## *Descriptions of people*

### (personality - character - appearance)

(page 1:  abbreviated →  butter)

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| **abbreviated piece of nothing** | This slang expression refers to someone who is considered to be insignificant or worthless. *Bob doesn't think much of his new colleague. He calls him an 'abbreviated piece of nothing'.* |
| **all brawn and no brain** | Someone who is physically very strong but not very intelligent is said to be all brawn and no brain. *He's an impressive player to watch, but he's all brawn and no brain.* |
| **all sizzle and no steak** | Someone who turns out to be disappointing, after a promotional campaign which led us to expect something better, is called all sizzle and no steak. *Because of the electoral promises he made, which so far he has failed to keep, many people call the new president 'all sizzle and no steak'.* |
| **all things to all people** | If you are all things to all people, you please or satisfy everyone. *She's exhausted tying to be a good wife,  a good mother and a good teacher,  but she can't be all things to all people.* |
| **alter ego** | The term alter ego, which in Latin means 'other self', refers to a very close and trusted friend who is very like yourself. |
| **apple of your eye** | A person, usually a child, who is the apple of your eye is one for whom you have great affection. *My grandson is the apple of my eye.* |
| **armchair critic** | An armchair critic is someone who gives advice based on theory rather than practice. *That guy is such an armchair critic - no experience but plenty of advice.* |
| **armchair traveller** | Someone who reads books or watches TV programmes about other places and countries, but doesn't actually travel anywhere, is called an armchair traveller.  *A surprising number of adventure books are bought by armchair travellers.* |
| **bad egg** | Someone who is a bad egg is an untrustworthy person often involved in trouble whose company should be avoided. *I don't want my son to be friends with Bobby Smith.  Bobby's a bad egg.* |
| **behind the times** | A person who is behind the times has old-fashioned ideas and does not keep up with modern life in general. *Jane doesn't have a mobile phone.  She's completely behind the times.* |
| **big cheese** | This expression refers to a person who has a lot of power and influence in an organisation. *Tom's father is a big cheese in the oil industry.* |
| **big fish in a small pond** | This term refers to an important or highly-ranked person in a small group or organisation. *He could get a job with a big company but he enjoys being a big fish in a small pond.* |
| **born with a silver spoon in one's mouth** | A person who is born with a silver spoon in their mouth is born into a very rich family. *She never has to worry about money; she was born with a silver spoon in her mouth.* |
| **butter wouldn't melt in your mouth** | If you say that someone looks as if butter wouldn't melt in their mouth, you mean that they look completely innocent, but that they are capable of doing unpleasant things. *The boy who stole the purse looked as if butter wouldn't melt in his mouth.* |

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| **call a spade a spade** | A person who *calls a spade a spade* speaks openly and truthfully about something, especially difficult matters. *What I like about the new manager is that he calls a spade a spade - it makes things so much easier for everyone.* |
| **fat *cat*** | Term used to refer to a rich, powerful, self-satisfied person who uses their money and power in a way that you disapprove of.  *The place was full of fat cats on their big yachts.* |
| **cat's whiskers (also: cat's pyjamas)** | This expression refers to someone who considers themselves to be better than others in a particular area : beauty, competence, intelligence, sport, etc. *Ever since she got a promotion, she thinks she's the cat's whiskers!* |
| **chip off the old block** | A person who is a *chip off the old block* resembles one of their parents in appearance, character or behaviour. *James is a chip off the old block - he reacts the same way as his father.* |
| **class act** | To say that someone, for example an athlete or entertainer, is a *class act* means that they are very good at what they do. *Her career is just beginning but she's already a class act.* |
| **cog in the machine** | If you say that someone is *a cog in the machine*, you mean that, while they are necessary, they only play a small part in an organisation or plan. *The police quickly realized that the suspect was just a cog in the machine.* |
| **couch potato** | If you refer to someone as a *couch potato*, you criticize them for spending a lot of time sitting and watching television. *Don't be such a couch potato. There are better ways of spending your time than in front of the TV.* |
| **not cut out for something** | If you are *not cut out for something*, you are not the sort of person to succeed or be happy in a particular activity. *I started studying medicine but I quickly realized that I wasn't cut out for it.* |
| **dark horse** | A *dark horse* is secretive person who keeps hidden a surprising ability or skill. *He is such a dark horse. I never knew he was a playwright !* |
| **dead loss** | Someone described as a *dead loss* is absolutely useless or a complete failure. *When it comes to gardening, my brother is a dead loss.* |
| **dead man walking** | A *dead man walkin*g is someone who will inevitably be in great trouble very soon, especially a person who is about to lose their job or position. *Because of the way he handled the recent riots, the minister is a dead man walking.* |
| **dog in the manger** | A person referred to as a *dog in the manger* is someone who stops others from enjoying something he/she cannot use or doesn't want. *She hates the guitar so she won't allow her son to learn to play it - a real dog in the manger!* |
| **doubting Thomas** | A 'doubting Thomas' is a person who will not believe something without proof, or without seeing it for themselves. *I had to show him my membership card.  What a doubting Thomas!* |
| **down at heel** | A person who is *down-at-heel*is someone whose appearance is untidy or neglected because of lack of money. *The down-at-heel student I first met became a successful writer.* |
| **down to earth** | Someone who is *down to earth* is not a dreamer but a realistic and practical person who has sensible reactions and expectations. *Don't ask Suzy for help.  She's fun, but not very down to earth.* |

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| **dressed to kill** | When someone, especially a woman, is *dressed to kill*, they are wearing very fashionable or glamorous clothes intended to attract attention. *She arrived at the reception dressed to kill.* |
| **dressed up to the nines** | Someone *dressed up to the nines* is wearing very smart or glamorous clothes. *Caroline must be going to a party - she's dressed up to the nines.* |
| **dyed-in-the-wool** | This expression is used to describe a person who has fixed, uncompromising, deep-felt beliefs to which they are committed. *Bob and Jane are dyed-in-the-wool ecologists who use only biodegradable products.* |
| **eager beaver** | The term*eager beaver* refers to a person who is hardworking and enthusiastic, sometimes considered overzealous. *The new accountant works all the time -  first to arrive and last to leave. He's a real eager beaver!* |
| **even steven** | Two or more people who are*even stevens* are equal to each other.  None of them has more than the others; none is owed anything or has anything due. *The two boys shared equally the money they made delivering pizzas so now they're even stevens.* |
| **face like a bulldog chewing a wasp** | To say that someone has a*face like a bulldog chewing a wasp*means that you find them very unattractive because they have a screwed-up ugly expression on their face. *Not only was he rude but he had a face like a bulldog chewing a wasp!* |
| **face like thunder** | If someone has a*face like thunder*, they look very angry. *When Dad is really angry, he has a face like thunder!* |
| **face like a wet week-end** | If someone has a *face like a wet week-en*d, they look sad and miserable. *What's wrong with Pete? He's got a face like a wet week-end!* |
| **face only a mother could love** | This is a humoristic way of saying that someone is ugly or unattractive. *The poor guy has a face only a mother could love.* |
| **face that would stop a clock** | Someone who has a*face that would stop a clock* has a shockingly unattractive face. *You'll recognize him - he's tall and thin, with a face that would stop a clock!* |
| **fast talker** | A person who speaks quickly and easily but cannot always be trusted is called a*fast talker.* *The salesman was a fast talker who persuaded the old lady to buy a new washing machine.* |
| **fat cat** | To refer to a rich and powerful person as a*fat cat*means that you disapprove of the way they use their money or power. *The place was full of fat cats on their big yachts.* |
| **to a fault** | To say that someone has a good quality*to a fault* means that they have a lot, or even too much, of that quality. *My aunt is generous to a fault, always ready to help anyone who claims to be in need.* |

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| **feet of clay** | If someone who is admired is found to have a weakness, fault or defect of character, they are said to have *feet of clay*. *No one is perfect.  Many successful people have feet of clay*. |
| **fifth wheel** | This expression refers to a person who find themselves in a situation where their presence is unnecessary and as a result they feel useless. *Everyone seemed to have a specific role except me. I felt like a fifth wheel* |
| **fixed in our ways** | People who are*fixed in their ways* do not want to change their normal way of doing things. *My grandparents are very fixed in their ways and dislike any changes.* |
| **fresh as a daisy** | Someone who is *(as) fresh as a daisy* is lively and attractive, in a clean and fresh way. *I met Molly the other day.  She looked as fresh as a daisy.* |
| **full of beans** | A person who is *full of beans* is lively, active and healthy. *He may be getting old but he's still full of beans.* |
| **full of hot air** | Someone who is*full of hot air*is full of nonsense and talks a lot without saying anything worthwhile. *Don't listen to Alex - he's full of hot air!* |
| **full of piss and vinegar** | People who are*full of piss and vinegar* are very lively, boisterous or full of youthful vitality. *I had to look after a group of kids full of piss and vinegar.* |
| **full of the milk of human kindness** | Someone who is full of the *milk of human kindness*, is naturally kind and compassionate to others. *She's a wonderful person - full of the milk of human kindness.* |
| **full as a tick** | If someone is (as)*full as a tick,* they have eaten or drunk too much. *The little boy ate biscuits and drank lemonade until he was as full as a tick.* |
| **fur coat and no knickers** | A person who tries to appear distinguished but has no real class is referred to as *'fur coat and no knickers*'. *Don't let her impress you.  She's what we call  'fur coat and no knickers'!* |
| **going places** | To say that someone is *going places* means that they show talent and ability that will no doubt lead to a successful future. *Even at college it was obvious that Paul was going places.* |
| **hairy at the heel** | A person who is *hairy at the heel*is thought to be untrustworthy or even dangerous. *Rumour has it that the owner of the club is a bit hairy at the heel.* |
| **hale and hearty** | Someone, especially an old person, who is *hale and hearty* is in excellent health. *My grandmother is still hale and hearty at the age of ninety.* |
| **happy-go-lucky** | If you are a *happy-go-lucky*person, you are cheerful and carefree all the time. *He's a happy-go-lucky sort of guy - always in good humour.* |
| **hard as nails** | A person who is (as) *hard as nails* is unsentimental and shows no sympathy. *Don't expect any sympathy from him.  He's as hard as nails.* |

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| **have the makings of** | A person who *has the makings of something* has qualities and potential that could be developed. *The teacher says Sarah has the makings of an excellent journalist.* |
| **head and shoulders above** | To say that one person is *head and shoulders above* the others means that they are much better than the rest  of them. *The award winner was head and shoulders above the others*. |
| **old head on young shoulders** | This expression refers to a child or young person who thinks and expresses themselves like an older more-experienced person. *When she heard Emily warning her brother to stay out of trouble, her mother thought : "That's an old head on young shoulders."* |
| **high and mighty** | Someone who is *high and mighty*behaves in a haughty manner as though they were superior to others. *"Don't get all high and mighty!" said my grandmother to my cousin. "Everyone helps with the housework in this house."* |
| **holier-than-thou** | The attitude of people who consider themselves to be more virtuous or morally superior to others can be called *'holier-than-thou'.* *I can't stand the holier-than-thou attitude of some political candidates*. |
| **horse of a different colour** | To describe a person or a problem as *a horse of a different colour*means either that the person does things differently from others, or that the nature of the problem is entirely different. *I expected to negotiate with the sales manager, but the chairman turned up - now he's a horse of a different colour!* |
| **dark horse** | If you refer to someone as *a dark horse* you mean that they are secretive or that little is known about them. *I can't say I know my neighbour.  He's a bit of a dark horse.* |
| **in a class of one's own** | If someone is*in a class of their own*, they are unequalled and considered better than anyone else of their kind. *As a singer, Maria Callas was in a class of her own.* |
| **jack of all trades** | A *jack of all trades* is a person who can do many different things but is not very good at any one of them.. *I'm looking for a skilled worker, not a jack-of-all-trades.* |
| **just off the boat** | A person who is*just off the boat* is naive and lacks experience. *How do you expect me to work with a trainee who's just off the boat!* |
| **larger than life** | A person who is*larger than life*attracts special attention because they are very impressive or unusually remarkable in their appearance, behaviour or personality. *He was a larger-then-life character, both onstage and behind the scene.* |
| **laughing stock** | A person who does something stupid or ridiculous which causes others to laugh becomes *a laughing stock.* *If you wear that to school you'll be the laughing stock of the class!* |
| **life and soul of the party** | The*life and soul of the party* is the most lively and amusing person present at an event. *I'm so glad we invited Emily. She was the life and soul of the party.* |
| **live wire** | Someone who is highly vivacious, energetic and full of enthusiasm is a*live wire.* *Things have brightened up since Charlie arrived.  He's a real live wire!* |

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| **long in the tooth** | A person who is*long in the tooth*is a bit too old to do something. *She's a bit long in the tooth for a cabaret dancer, isn't she?* |
| **look the part** | If you *look the part*, your appearance makes you ideally suited for a particular job or role. *It was a mistake to choose a pretty young girl to play the witch.  She didn't look the part at all*. |
| **look the picture** | If someone*looks the picture,* they look very pretty. *The little girl looked the picture in her new dress.* |
| **look the picture of health** | To*look the picture of health*means to look extremely healthy. *Nice to see you again Mr. Brown. I must say you look the picture of health.* |
| **look a sight** | If a person*looks a sight,* their appearance is awful, unsuitable or very untidy. *She looks a sight in that dress!* |
| **loose cannon** | Someone who is referred to as*a loose cannon* cannot be completely trusted because of unpredictable and irresponsible behaviour which can cause trouble. *Keep an eye on Jamie. He tends to turn into a loose cannon when he has a few drinks.* |
| **lower than a snake's belly** | To say that someone is *lower than a snake's belly*means that they are bad, dishonest or have very low moral standards. *Anyone who is capable of taking advantage of young vulnerable children is lower than a snake's belly.* |
| **mouse potato** | This term refers to a person who spends a lot of time in front of the computer. *My son and his friends are all mouse potatoes - constantly glued to the computer!* |
| **all mouth and no trousers** | This is said of someone who talks a lot about doing something but never actually does it. *He keeps saying he's going to resign and travel around the world, but he's all mouth and no trousers.* |
| **nice as pie** | If a person is *as nice as pie*, they are surprisingly kind and friendly. *After our argument, she was as nice as pie!* |
| **not a hair out of place** | If someone does *not have a hair out of place*, their appearance is perfect. *Angela is always impeccably dressed - never a hair out of place.* |
| **not the only pebble on the beach** | To say that someone is *not the only pebble on the beach* means that they are not the only person worth considering. *He thinks his refusal to join the team will cause problems, but there are other alternatives ...he's not the only pebble on the beach!* |
| **pen pusher** | A person who does work that requires little action, just office work, and who lacks operating experience, is called *a pen pusher. Those pen pushers have no idea what it's like on a building site.* |
| **pie-eyed** | Someone who is*pie-eyed*is completely drunk. *He had never taken an alcoholic drink so after one beer the boy was pie-eyed.* |
| **plastic smile** | A person with *a plastic smile* is wearing a forced smile which makes them appear happier that they really are. *A receptionist greeted customers with a plastic smile.* |

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| **plum in your mouth** | Someone who speaks with an upper-class accent is said to have *a plum in their mouth.* *He speaks just like an aristocrat - with a plum in his mouth!* |
| **poker face** | Someone who has*a poker face* has an expressionless face that shows no emotion or reaction at all. *He sat with a poker face all through the show, revealing nothing of his thoughts.* |
| **proud as a peacock** | A person who is as *proud as a peacock* is extremely proud. *When his son won first prize, Bill was as proud as a peacock.* |
| **puts pants on one leg at a time** | To say that someone *puts their pants on one leg at a time* means that the person is a human being no different from anyone else. *Don't be scared to speak to him.  He puts his pants on one leg at a time just like the rest of us!* |
| **has a quick temper** | Someone who has a*quick temper*gets angry very easily. *He makes me nervous - he's got such a quick temper.* |
| **rotten apple** | This term refers to a person who is considered to be dishonest or immoral and has a bad influence on others in the group. *It is said that in any profession there is always a rotten apple.* |
| **rough diamond** | A person who is good-natured but lacks polished manners and/or education is said to be*a rough diamond. He's a great guy but a bit of a rough diamond!* |
| **saving grace** | Someone who has *a saving grace* has a quality that prevents them from being totally bad. *She's a horrible person but she has one saving grace, her kindness to animals.* |
| **sea legs** | A person who*has sea legs* is used to walking on a moving ship, or has the ability to adjust to a new situation. *It takes a while in a new job to find your sea legs.* |
| **sell ice to Eskimos** | This expression is used to describe a person who has the ability to persuade someone to accept something totally unnecessary or useless.  *It's not surprising he was named 'salesman of the year'. He could sell ice to Eskimos!* |
| **set in one's ways** | A person who is *set in their ways* is unable or unwilling to change their ideas, habits or methods, often because they are old. *My grandmother has the same routine every day. She is very set in her ways.* |
| **shrinking violet** | A person referred to as*a shrinking violet* is a timid or shy person. *The witness was a shrinking violet who had difficulty expressing herself.* |
| **significant other** | The term*'significant other*' refers to a person, such as a spouse, partner or lover, with whom you have a long-term relationship. *Harry says he makes no decisions without consulting his significant other.* |
| **silver surfer** | A *silver surfer*is an elderly person who uses the internet. *After just a few questions my grandmother was ready to join the silver surfers.* |
| **silver-tongued** | A *silver-tongued* person is a smooth talker who speaks so convincingly that they manage to persuade others to do what they want. *A silver-tongued salesman persuaded my mother to buy a new washing machine although the one she had was fine!* |
| **sitting duck** | A *sitting duck* is an easy target, a person who is easy to deceive. *The young girl was a sitting duck for the photographer.* |

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| **sleeping/silent partner** | This term refers to a person who invests in a business without taking an active part in its management, and whose association with the enterprise is not public knowledge. *He works alone but his business is partly financed by a sleeping partner.* |
| **slippery as an eel** | To say that someone is as*slippery as an eel* means that they are difficult to catch and they manage to avoid answering questions. *The man was as slippery as an eel.  He was arrested for theft several times but was never convicted.* |
| **small dog, tall weeds** | This expression is used to refer to someone who does not have the ability or the resources necessary to perform a task. *It may be too difficult for the trainee - small dog, tall weeds!* |
| **small fry** | People or organisations that are considered unimportant can be referred to as*small fry. This term can also refer to young children. The police seized a large quantity of drugs, and some small fry, but not the organisers they were hoping to catch.* |
| **smart alec** | A*smart alec* is an annoying self-assertive person who tries to show off how clever they are. *Some smart alec interrupted the game claiming that the answers were incorrect!* |
| **social butterfly** | A person who has a lot of friends and acquaintances and likes to flit from one social event to another is called a *social butterfly.* *Jessica is constantly out and about;  she's a real social butterfly.* |
| **spitting image** | If one person is *the spitting image* of another, they look exactly like each other. *Sarah is the spitting image of her mother.* |
| **square peg in a round hole** | To say that a person is *a square peg in a round hole* means that they are not suitable for the job they are doing or the situation they are in. *He was a bad choice for the job - a square peg in a round hole.* |
| **(made of) sterner stuff** | If someone is made of*sterner stuff*, they have a strong character and are better able to deal with difficulties than others. *I was surprised to see him so upset.  I thought he was made of sterner stuff.* |
| **stickler for the rules** | Someone who is*a stickler for the rules* is a disciplinarian who demands strict observance of the rules or procedures. *Be sure to use the proper form.  Mr. Brown is a stickler for the rules.* |
| **straight as an arrow** | Someone who is *as straight as an arrow* is a morally upright person who is extremely honest. *You can leave the keys with Andy.  He's as straight as an arrow.* |
| **stubborn as a mule** | If someone is *as stubborn as a mule,*they are very obstinate and unwilling to listen to reason or change their mind. *His friends advised him to accept the offer, but you know Larry - he's as stubborn as a mule!* |
| **talk the hind leg off a donkey** | This expression is used to describe a very talkative person. *It's difficult to end a conversation with Betty.  She could talk the hind leg off a donkey!* |
| **talk nineteen to the dozen** | If someone*talks nineteen to the dozen,* they speak very quickly. *He was talking nineteen to the dozen so I didn't catch the whole story.* |

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| **tarred with the same brush** | When a person is *tarred with the same brush*, they are regarded as having the same faults or bad qualities as those they associate with. *Don't hang around with those guys or you'll be tarred with the same brush.* |
| **thin on the top** | If someone, usually a man, is*thin on the top*, they are losing their or going bald. *Dad's gone a bit thin on the top in the last few years*. |
| **top dog** | To say that a person is*top dog*means that they are better or more powerful than others. *She's top dog in cosmetics today.* |
| **tough as old boots** | If something, specially meat, is *(as) tough as old boots*, it is hard to cut and difficult to chew.  (This can also refer to a person who is strong either physically or in character.) *I was served a steak as tough as old boots.* |
| **tough cookie** | A person who is a*tough cookie*is one who is self-confident and ambitious and will do what is necessary to get what they want. *I'm not worried about Jason's future - he's a tough cookie!* |
| **tower of strength** | The term*tower of strength*is used to describe a person who is very helpful and supportive during difficult times. *All during my illness, my sister was a tower of strength.* |
| **ugly as sin** | This expression is used to refer to people or things that are considered to be very unattractive. *Have you seen the new neighbour's dog? It's as ugly as sin!* |
| **upper crust** | This term refers to the higher levels of society, the upper class or the aristocracy. *William hides his working-class background and pretends to be from the upper crust.* |
| **vertically challenged** | This term is a humoristic way of referring to someone who is not very tall. *High shelves are difficult for vertically challenged shoppers.* |
| **wet blanket** | A person who is *a wet blanket* is so boring or unenthusiastic that they prevent others from enjoying themselves. *Come on!   Relax !  Don't be such a wet blanket!* |
| **whistle-blower** | If you report an illegal or socially harmful activity to the authorities, and give information about those responsible for it, you are a *whistle-blower.* *The poor working conditions were reported by a whistle-blower.* |
| **whiz kid** | A *whiz kid*is someone, usually young, who is very talented and successful at doing something. *Apparently the new engineer knows what he's doing - a real whiz-kid from what I've  heard.* |
| **winning ways** | A person who has*winning ways* has a charming or persuasive manner of gaining the affection of others or obtaining what they want. *My grandson is hard to resist - he's got such winning ways.* |
| **worth one's weight in gold** | Someone who is *worth their weight in gold* is considered to be of great value. *We couldn't run the farm without him.  He's worth his weight in gold.* |
| **yellow-bellied** | A person who is*yellow-bellied* is cowardly, or not at all brave. *The bus was full of yellow-bellied passengers who disappeared when the driver was attacked by two youth*s. |

*English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions*

***Consequences - Effects***

(Idioms page 1 :  answer for →  face the music)

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| **answer for** | If someone has to *answer for something*, they have to accept responsibility for their actions. *He will have to answer for his dishonesty.* |
| **be that as it may** | This expression means that what the speaker says may be true but it will not change the situation. *OK. Fewer people may come because of the bad weather, but be that as it may, it's too late to cancel the show.* |
| **can't make an omelette without breaking eggs** | This expression means that it is impossible to make important changes without causing some unpleasant effects. *Some people will lose their jobs after the merger, but you can't make an omelette without breaking eggs.* |
| **change the face of something** | When an innovation, discovery or event *changes the face of something,* it alters it completely or in a major way. *Social networks have changed the face of modern communication.* |
| **chickens come home to roost** | If you say that*chickens have come home to roost*, you mean that bad or embarrassing things done in the past by someone are now causing problems for that person. *As tenants the couple were noisy and disorderly.  Now they can't find a place to rent.  The chickens have come home to roost!* |
| **come to a bad end** | If someone *comes to a bad end*, their actions lead to disastrous consequences which are sometimes deserved or predictable. *If that boy doesn't change his ways, he'll come to a bad end.* |
| **come with the territory** | To say that something *comes with the territory* means that it has to be accepted as part of a job or responsibility, even if it is unpleasant. *A successful actor has to expect intensive media coverage - that comes with the territory!* |
| **come what may** | If you declare that you will do something *come what may*, you are saying that you will do it whatever the consequences may be. *Come what may, I'm going to tell my mother-in-law what I think of her!* |
| **(get) comeuppance** | When someone *gets their comeuppance*, they receive the treatment they deserve (usually punishment or retribution) for their behaviour or actions. *Any pupils found bullying the newcomers will soon get their comeuppance.* |
| **cut both ways** | Something that*cuts both ways* has both a positive and a negative effect at the same time. *Banning cars in the town centre can cut both ways : less traffic congestion but fewer customers in the shops.* |
| **devil to pay** | This is a way of announcing that there will be trouble if something happens. *Be careful. There'll be the devil to pay if you break anything!* |
| **even the score** | When a person decides to *even the score*, they try to get their revenge on someone who has cheated or done them harm. *When Jack discovered that Bob had cheated, he was determined to even the score.* |
| **face the music** | If you have to *face the music,* you have to accept the unpleasant consequences of your actions. *He was caught stealing.  Now he has to face the music.* |
| **fall from grace** | To say that someone has *fallen from grace*means that they have done something wrong, immoral or unacceptable, and as a result  have lost their good reputation. *The Finance Minister fell from grace as a result of a sex scandal.* |

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| **fall on one's sword** | If you*fall on your sword*, you accept the consequences of an unsuccessful or wrong action. *The organiser of the referendum resigned when the poor results were announced.  It was said that he' fell on his sword'.* |
| **get your fingers burnt** | If someone *gets their fingers burnt,* they suffer as a result of an unsuccessful action and are nervous about trying again. *He got his fingers burnt so badly in the last elections that he decided to withdraw from politics.* |
| **open doors to/for** | If something*opens doors*, it provides opportunities or possibilities for the future. *A degree from a top university generally opens doors to major companies.* |
| **price you have to pay** | The *price you have to pay* is what you have to endure in return for something you gain or achieve. *Lack of privacy is the price you have to pay for being a celebrity.* |
| **one's own undoing** | If you do something that is the cause of your own failure, loss or downfall, it is*your own undoing.*You can blame nobody but yourself. *If he continues to gamble like that, it will be his own undoing.* |
| **open doors to something** | If something*opens doors*, it provides opportunities or possibilities for the future. *A degree from a top university generally opens doors to major companies.* |
| **pay dearly for** | If you *pay dearly* for something that you do or say, you suffer a lot as a result of it. *If you leave your job now, you may have to pay dearly for it.* |
| **pay dividends** | If something you do*pays dividends,* it brings advantages or rewards at a later date. *The time he spent learning English paid dividends when he started looking for a job.* |
| **price you have to pay** | The *price you have to pay* is what you have to endure in return for something you gain or achieve. *Lack of privacy is the price you have to pay for being a celebrity.* |
| **reap the harvest** | If you *reap the harvest*, you benefit or suffer as a direct result of past actions. *When he won his first match, he began to reap the harvest of all the hard training.* |
| **ripple effect** | When an action has an effect on something, which in turn effects something else, it is said to have*a ripple effect.* *An increase in the price of oil will have a ripple effect on the economy as a whole.* |
| **slap on the wrist** | If you get a *slap on the wrist*, you receive mild punishment, or you are reprimanded for something you have done. *I got a slap on the wrist from my wife for leaving the kitchen in a mess.* |
| **stand in good stead** | To say that a skill, an ability or previous experience will *stand you in good stead* means that it will be beneficial to you in the future. *Being able to speak another language will stand you in good stead when looking for a job.* |
| **stew in your own juice** | If you let someone*stew in their own juice,* you leave them to worry about the consequences of their own actions. *Ricky spent last night in prison for starting a fight - let him just stew in his own juice!* |
| **take the rap** | If you*take the rap,* you accept blame or punishment for something, even if you are not responsible. *The whole class had to the take the rap for the disorder.* |
| **tit for tat** | This expression refers to an injury or insult given in return for one received. *He kicked me, so I kicked him - it was tit for tat!* |
| **you can't unring a bell!** | This expression means that you cannot undo what has been done, so you must live with the consequences of your actions. |

*English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions*

***Comparisons - Similarity***

**(as ... as     /     like)**

**(Idioms page 1 :  as blind as a bat  → as fit as a fiddle)**

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| **as blind as a bat** | Someone whose vision is very poor, or who is unable to see anything, is (as) *blind as a bat.* *Without his glasses, the old man is as blind as a bat.* |
| **as broad as it's long** | This expression means that there is no real difference which alternative is chosen. *Take the high-speed train, or fly and take a taxi? It's as broad as it's long.* |
| **as clean as a whistle** | Something*as clean as a whistle* is extremely clean. This can also mean that a person's criminal record is clean. *Bob spent the afternoon washing and shining his car until it was as clean as a whistle.* |
| **as close / as dumb as an oyster** | Someone who is as *close* or as *dumb as an oyste*r will never reveal something told in confidence or betray a secret. *Sophie will never repeat what you tell her.  She's as dumb as an oyster.* |
| **as cool as a cucumber** | A person who is as *cool as a cucumber* is not anxious, but relaxed and non-emotional. *The bride's mother stayed as cool as a cucumber all through the ceremony.* |
| **as crooked as a dog's hind leg** | To say that someone is as *crooked as a dog's hind leg* means that they are very dishonest indeed. *He can't be trusted - he's as crooked as a dog's hind leg.* |
| **dead as a dodo** | To say that something is (as) *dead as a dodo* means that it is unquestionably dead or obsolete, or has gone out of fashion. (A dodo is a bird that is now extinct.) *The floppy disk is an invention that is now (as) dead as a dodo.* |
| **dead as a doornail** | This expression is used to stress that a person or thing is very definitely dead. *They've started fighting again, so the peace agreement is now as dead as a doornail.* |
| **as different as chalk and cheese** | Two people who are as different as *chalk and cheese* are completely different from each other. *I'm surprised they get on so well.  They're as different as chalk and cheese.* |
| **as different as night and day** | Two people or things that are very different from each other are *as different as night and day.* *Although they are twins they are as different as night and day.* |
| **as dry as dust** | Something that is as *dry as dust* is very dry indeed. This expression can also refer to something dull and uninteresting. *The ground was as dry as dust. / His speech was as dry as dust.* |
| **as dull as ditchwater** | Something as *dull as ditchwater* is very boring. *The film was as dull as ditchwater.  I nearly fell asleep.* |
| **as easy as pie** | Something that is *(as) easy as pie* is very easy to do. *"How did the English test go?" "No problem,  it was (as) easy as pie!"* |
| **as fit as a fiddle** | A person who is as*fit as a fiddle* is in an excellent state of health or physical condition. *My grandfather is nearly ninety but he's as fit as a fiddle.* |

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| **as free as a bird** | If someone is as*free as a bird*, they are completely free to do as they please. *My dad's very happy - he's as free as a bird since he retired.* |
| **as fresh as a daisy** | A Freudian slip is a mistake made by a speaker which is considered to reveal their true thoughts or feelings. *So you got the job - I'm so sad ...  Sorry, I mean 'glad'!* |
| **as full as a tick** | If someone is (as)*full as a tick,* they have eaten or drunk too much. *The little boy ate biscuits and drank lemonade until he was as full as a tick.* |
| **as good as gold** | A child who is *as good as gold* is obedient and well-behaved. *Your children are always as good as gold when I look after them.* |
| **as happy as a flea in a doghouse** | If someone is (as)*happy as a flea in a doghouse*, they are very happy and contented. *Since she moved to a smaller apartment, my mother is as happy as a flea in a doghouse!* |
| **as happy as Larry** | If you are (as) *happy as Larry,* you are very happy indeed. *My dad's as happy as Larry at the week-end when we all arrive home.* |
| **as hard as nails** | A person who is (as) *hard as nails* is unsentimental and shows no sympathy. *Don't expect any sympathy from him.  He's as hard as nails.* |
| **as keen as mustard** | If someone is *as keen as mustard*, they are very eager, enthusiastic or motivated. *We should ask Emily to join the team.  She's as keen as mustard.* |
| **as mad as a hatter** | To say that someone is *as mad as a hatter*means that they are very strange or insane. *The old lady next door is as mad as a hatter.  She says the strangest things!* |
| **as much use as a handbrake on a canoe** | This expression refers to something which is completely useless or serves no purpose. *With no electricity, a refrigerator would be as much use as a handbrake on a canoe!* |
| **as nice as pie** | If a person is *as nice as pie*, they are surprisingly kind and friendly. *After our argument, she was as nice as pie!* |
| **as nutty as a fruitcake** | Someone who is *(as) nutty as a fruitcake* is insane or crazy. *Don't pay attention to what the old man says; he's as nutty as a fruitcake!* |
| **as proud as a peacock** | A person who is as *proud as a peacock* is extremely proud. *When his son won first prize, Bill was as proud as a peacock.* |
| **proud/pleased as punch** | Someone who is as *proud or pleased as punch* is delighted or feels very satisfied about something. *Dad was as proud as punch when he won the tennis match.* |
| **as quick as a dog can lick a dish** | If you do something surprisingly fast, you do it *as quick as a dog can lick a dish.* *He packed his bag as quick as a dog can lick a dish.* |
| **as quiet as a *mouse*** | When someone is as *quiet as a mouse,* they make no noise at all. *The burglar was a quiet as a mouse as he moved around the house.* |

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| **as scarce as hens' teeth** | To say that something is *as scarce as hens' teeth* emphasizes that it is extremely rare, to the point of non-existence. *Take enough supplies.  Water is as scarce as hens' teeth where you're going!* |
| **as sharp as a tack** | A person who is *as sharp as a tack* is able to think quickly and learn very fast. *You won't have to explain it to him twice.  He's as sharp as a tack*. |
| **as slippery as an eel** | To say that someone is as*slippery as an eel* means that they are difficult to catch and they manage to avoid answering questions. *The man was as slippery as an eel.  He was arrested for theft several times but was never convicted.* |
| **as sly as a fox** | Someone who is*as sly as a fox* is cunning and clever at getting what they want, especially by deceiving or tricking people. *Be wary of that insurance salesman.  He's as sly as a fox.* |
| **straight as an arrow** | Someone who is *as straight as an arrow* is a morally upright person who is extremely honest. *You can leave the keys with Andy.  He's as straight as an arrow.* |
| **straight as a ramrod** | Someone who is*(as) straight as a ramrod*is a person who keeps a straight back and looks very serious. *When my grandfather invited us for dinner, he used to sit straight as a ramrod at the head of the table.* |
| **as thick as thieves** | To say that two people are *as thick as thieves* means that they are very close friends who are very loyal to each other. *Chris always takes Danny's side.  They're as thick as thieves.* |
| **as stubborn as a mule** | If someone is *as stubborn as a mule,*they are very obstinate and unwilling to listen to reason or change their mind. *His friends advised him to accept the offer, but you know Larry - he's as stubborn as a mule!* |
| **as tough as old boots** | If something, specially meat, is *(as) tough as old boots*, it is hard to cut and difficult to chew.  (This can also refer to a person who is strong either physically or in character.) *I was served a steak as tough as old boots.* |
| **as ugly as sin** | This expression is used to refer to people or things that are considered to be very unattractive. *Have you seen the new neighbour's dog? It's as ugly as sin!* |
| **as ugly as a toad** | Someone *as ugly as a toad*is extremely unattractive. *The driver was as ugly as a toad but he was very kind and patient.* |
| **as useful as a chocolate teapot** | Something which is of no practical use at all is about *as useful as a chocolate teapot.* *When there are no roads, a car is about as useful as a chocolate teapot!* |
| **as white as a ghost** | A person who is *as white as a ghost* looks very pale and frightened. *She went as white as a ghost when she saw the gun.* |

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| **like the back of one's hand** | If you know something *like the back of your hand*, you are very familiar with it and know it in detail. *Of course I won't get lost.  I know London like the back of my hand!* |
| **like a bat out of hell** | If something moves *like a bat out of hell,* it moves very quickly. *He grabbed the envelope and ran like a bat out of hell.* |
| **like a bear with a sore head** | If someone is behaving like a *bear with a sore head*, they are very irritable and bad-tempered. *When his team lost the match, Brad was like a bear with a sore head.* |
| **like bringing a knife to a gunfight** | To say that an action was *like bringing a knife to a gunfight*means that there was a total lack of preparation. *Asking an inexperienced lawyer to defend such a difficult case was like bringing a knife to a gunfight!* |
| **(sound) like a broken record** | Someone who says the same thing again and again is said to sound like a broken record. *Dad! Stop telling me to be careful when I drive.  You sound like a broken record!* |
| **like a cat on hot bricks** | A person who is*like a cat on hot bricks* is very nervous or restless. *The week before the results were published, she was like a cat on hot bricks.* |
| **like a scalded cat** | If something or something moves*like a scalded cat*, they move very fast, usually because they are frightened or shocked. *As soon as he saw the policeman, he ran off like a scalded cat.* |
| **like a cat that ate the canary** | If, after an achievement or success, a person appears very self-satisfied or pleased with themselves, you can say that they look *like the cat that ate the canary.* *When the boss complimented him on his work, Steve looked like the cat that ate the canary.* |
| **like something the cat dragged in** | If you compare a person or thing to*something the cat dragged in,* you think they they look dirty, untidy or generally unappealing. *My teenage son often looks like something the cat dragged in.* |
| **like cat and dog** | Two people who fight or argue*like cat and dog* frequently have violent arguments, even though they are fond of each other. *They fight like cat and dog but they're still together after 30 years.* |
| **like death warmed up** | If you look*like death warmed up*, you look very ill or tired. *My boss told me to go home.  He said I looked like death warmed up.* |
| **like a deer/rabbit caught in the headlights** | When you are so surprised that you are momentarily confused or unable to react quickly, you are *like a deer (or a rabbit) caught in the headlights.* *Surprised by the journalist's question, he was like a deer caught in the headlights*. |

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| **like a *dog* with two tails** | If someone is*like a dog with two tails*, they are extremely happy. *When Paul won the first prize he was like a dog with two tails.* |
| **like greased lightning** | If something moves*like greased lightning,* it moves extremely fast. *As soon as the owner appeared, the boy ran like greased lightning.* |
| **like herding cats** | This expression refers to the difficulty of coordinating a situation which involves people who all want to act independently. *Organizing an outing for a group of people from different countries is like herding cats!* |
| **like a headless chicken** | If a person rushes about *like a headless chicken*, they act in a disorderly way, without thinking or analysing the situation carefully. *As soon as the store opened, my mother started running around like a headless chicken, eager to find bargains.* |
| **like kicking whales down the beach** | This expression is used, especially in computing, to refer to a particularly slow  and difficult process. *Getting him to adopt the new method is like kicking whales down the beach.* |
| **like a moth to a flame** | To say that a person is attracted to someone or something *like a moth to a flame*means that the attraction is so strong they cannot resist. *He's drawn to the casino like a moth to a flame.* |
| **like nailing jelly to the wall** | To say that something is like*nailing jelly to the wall*  means that it is extremely difficult to do, if not impossible. *Keeping track of his movements is like nailing jelly to the wall.* |
| **like pouring water into a sieve** | If someone spends time or energy trying to do something that is inefficient or useless, it is*like pouring water into a sieve.* *Danny's mother used to say that teaching him good behaviour was like pouring water into a sieve.* |
| **like pulling teeth** | Something that is *like pulling teeth* is extremely difficult to obtain, especially if trying to extract information from someone. *Getting him to talk about his job was like pulling teeth!* |
| **like a red flag to a bull** | To say that a statement or action is like a *red flag to a bull*means that it is sure to make someone very angry or upset. *Don't mention Tom's promotion to Mike.  It would be like a red flag to a bull!* |
| **like a shot** | If you do something*like a shot,* you do it very quickly, without any hesitation. *If I won a lot of money on the lotto, I'd leave my job like a shot!* |
| **like a sore thumb** | If something *sticks out like a sore thumb*, it is very obvious or visible in an unpleasant way. *The modern building sticks out like a sore thumb among the old houses.* |
| **like taking candy from a baby** | To say that something is*like taking candy from a baby*means that it is very easy to do. *Don't worry - you'll manage.  It'll be like taking candy from a baby!* |

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| **like taking sand to the beach** | Doing something that is unnecessary or of no use at all is said to be*like taking sand to the beach.* *Bringing a cake to Judy's party is like taking sand to the beach;  she always uses a caterer.* |
| **like talking to a brick wall** | To say that a conversation with someone is *like talking to brick wal*l means that communication is impossible because there is no reaction or response. *I tried to discuss the problem with him but it was like talking to a brick wall.* |
| **like there's no tomorrow** | If someone does something *like there's no tomorrow,*they do it fast and eagerly, regardless of the future, as if this could be their last opportunity to do it. *I don't understand him;  he's spending money like there's no tomorrow.* |
| **like a thief in the night** | Someone who acts*like a thief in the night*does something secretly or in an unexpected manner. *He left the company like a thief in the night, without telling his colleagues or saying goodbye.* |
| **like a ton of bricks** | If somebody *comes down on you like a ton of bricks,*they criticize you severely because you have done something wrong. *If you don't follow his instructions carefully, he'll come down on you like a ton of bricks!* |
| **like turkeys voting for Christmas** | This expression is used to say that a particular option is unlikely to be chosen because it would not be in the interest of the people concerned.  (In many countries people eat turkey at Christmas.) *Expecting them to accept a decrease in salary would be like turkeys voting for Christmas.* |
| **like two peas in a pod** | Two people who are*like two peas in a pod* are very similar in appearance. *The two brothers are very alike - they're like two peas in a pod!* |
| **like water off a duck's back** | Criticism or comments which have no effect on someone is referred to as being *''like water off a duck's back*'. *He's been warned of the dangers of smoking but it's like water off a duck's back.* |
| **like (putting) lipstick on  a pig** | This expression means that to 'dress up' something unappealing or ugly, in a vain attempt to make it look better, is *like putting lipstick on a pig.* *Flowers on that ugly old bridge would be (like putting) lipstick on a pig!* |
| **like wildfire** | If something such as news, rumours or gossip spreads *like wildfire*, it becomes widely known very fast. *As soon as the nomination was announced, the news spread like wildfire.* |

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| **cut from the same cloth** | If two people are *cut from the same cloth*, they are very similar in character or behaviour. *Although the brothers look alike, they are not cut from the same cloth.  They each have their own personality.* |
| **much of a muchness** | This expession means 'very similar' or 'almost alike'. *It's hard to choose between the two - they're much of a muchness really.* |
| **not a patch on** | If something or someone is *not a patch on* an other, they are not nearly as good. *His second conference wasn't a patch on the first one.* |
| **not in the same league as** | If something  is *not in the same league,* it is of much lower standard than something else. *He had a good voice but he wasn't in the same league as Pavarotti.* |
| **not up to par** | If something is*not up to par*, it does not meet the required standard. *He didn't get the job because his English was not up to par.* |
| **a world of difference** | When comparing two things or situations, the expression *a world of difference* means that there is a vast difference between them. *A swimming pool would make a world of difference in this climate.* |
| **worlds apart** | When two people are very different, they are said to be*worlds apart.* *As regards our political opinions, we're worlds apart.* |

*English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions*

***Communication - Contact - Information***

(Idioms :   :  Chinese whispers   →  word of mouth)

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| **chinese whispers** | This expression refers to a process by which a message or piece of information (especially gossip, rumours or scandalous news) is passed on from one person to another, and changes along the way, so that the final version is often very different from the original. |
| **drop someone a line** | If you *drop someone a line*, you write a letter to them. *I always drop her a line to wish her a Merry Christmas*. |
| **get hold of** | If you obtain something, or manage to contact someone, yo*u get hold of them.* *I'd like to contact the owner.  Do you know where I can get hold of him?* |
| **get/give the low-down** | If you *get*or*give the low-down*, you get or give complete information or facts about something. *I'll call you after the meeting and give you the low-down.* |
| **hear through the grapevine** | If you *hear of something through the grapevine*, you learn about it informally, for example through friends or colleagues.  *"How did you hear that?" "Oh, through the grapevine as usual!"* |
| **hit the airwaves** | When someone *hits the airwaves*, they go on radio and/or TV to be interviewed or to promote something. *The hospital was embarrassed when the patient hit the airways with his side of the story.* |
| **hot off the press** | If a news article, for example, is *hot off the press*, it has just been published and contains the most recent information on the subject. *I just got it hot off the press; another bank has gone bankrupt.* |
| **keep someone posted** | If someone asks you to *keep them posted,* they want you to keep them informed about a situation. *Our agent promised to keep us posted on developments in the negotiations.* |
| **megaphone diplomacy** | If the media, through press releases, interviews and announcements, is instrumental in facilitating dialogue between two or more countries, this is called*megaphone diplomacy.* |
| **out of touch** | If you are *out of touch*, you no longer communicate with someone, or you are unaware of recent developments. *I've been out of touch with Jenny since we left college.* |
| **put someone in the picture** | If you give somebody all the information necessary to enable them to fully understand a situation, you *put them in the picture.* *Some changes were made during your absence.  Let me put you in the picture.* |
| **speed networking** | This term refers to a relatively new urban trend which consists in making a potential business contact by briefly talking to a series of people at an organised event and exchanging contact details. |
| **spread like wildfire** | If something such as news, rumours or gossip *spreads like wildfire*, it becomes widely known very fast. *As soon as the nomination was announced, the news spread like wildfire.* |
| **stool pigeon** | A person who acts as an informer, especially one who gives information to the police or the authorities, is called a*stool pigeon.* *I don't trust Jack. I think he's a stool pigeon for the management.* |
| **on the stump** | Before an election, when  politicians are campaigning for support and votes, they are *on the stump.* *On the stump for months, the candidates attended meeting after meeting.* |
| **touch base** | If you*touch base*with someone, you make contact or renew communication with them. *I'll try to touch base with you next week in London.* |
| **word of mouth** | Information passed on through conversation is transmitted *by word of mouth.*  *No announcement was necessary - the news had already spread by word of mouth.* |

*English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions*

***Colour***

(Idioms page 1  :  black gold →  blue murder)

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| **black gold** | The term*black gold*refers to the black colour and high value of oil. *Much of his money is invested in black gold.* |
| **black market** | The *black market* refers to the illegal buying and selling of goods or currencies. *Be careful of what you buy on the black market - it's not always good quality.* |
| **black mood** | To be*in a black mood* means to be irritable, angry or even depressed. *You'd better keep away from Bill today.  He's in a black mood.* |
| **black out** | If you *black out,* you lose consciousness. *When Tony saw the needle, he blacked out.* |
| **black sheep** | The*black sheep* is one who behaves very differently or badly, and is considered disreputable by the other members of the family. *Joe was the black sheep of the family, always getting into trouble*. |
| **black tie event** | This expression refers to a formal event at which men are required to wear a dinner jacket, or tuxedo, and a black bow tie. *I need to know if it's going to be a casual get-together or a black tie event*. |
| **in the black** | To say that a person or organisation is*in the black* means that they are financially sound, have a positive balance on their account and that they owe no money. |
| **beaten *black and blue*** | If a person is covered with bruise marks caused by being hit, they have been *beaten black and blue. The passenger was beaten black and blue by a gang of thugs.* |
| ***black and white*** | To say that something is*in black and white* means that there is written proof of it. *It's an obligation.  It's in black and white in your contract.* |
| **blue around the gills** | If a person looks *blue around gills*, (or *green* or *pale*) they look unwell or sick. *You should sit down.  You look a bit blue around the gills.* |
| **blue chip company** | This term refers to a company with a solid reputation for the quality of its products and the stability of its growth and earnings. *It's usually safe to invest in a blue chip company.* |
| **blue in the face** | If you do something until you are *blue in the fac*e, you try unsuccessfully to do something for a very long time. *I explained the situation until I was blue in the face but she wouldn't change her mind.* |
| **feel blue** | To *feel blue* means to have feelings of deep sadness or depression. *I'm going to see my grandmother. She's feeling a bit blue at the moment.* |
| **blue-eyed boy** | A *blue-eyed boy* is someone's favourite. *He's the director's blue-eyed boy!* |
| **once in a *blue* moon** | If something occurs *once in a blue moon*, it happens very rarely. *Bill has very little contact with his brother. They see each other once in a blue moon.* |
| **out of the blue** | If something happens *out of the blue*, it happens very unexpectedly. *I had nearly given up hope when out of the blue I was offered a job.* |
| **(scream) blue murder** | Someone who *screams blue murder* shouts or complains very loudly as if something very serious has happened. *The crowd started screaming blue murder when the football match was interrupted.* |

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| **brown as a berry** | To say that someone is as *brown as a berry*means that they are very tanned. *Judy came back from her holiday as brown as a berry.* |
| **browned off** | If you are *browned off*, you are bored, fed up or disheartened. *Tom is browned off with his job.* |
| **off *colour*** | If you are*off colour*, you look or feel ill. *What's the matter with Tom? He looks a bit off colour today.* |
| **see the *colour*of someone's money** | If you want to*see the colour of somebody's money,* you want to be sure that the person in question has enough money to pay you before you accept to do something. *I want to see the colour of his money before shipping the goods.* |
| **show one's true *colours*** | When a person*shows their true colours*, their behaviour reveals their real nature, with their qualities and/or weaknesses. *In times of crisis people show their true colours.* |
| **golden handcuffs** | The term *golden handcuffs* refers to a large sum of money or a generous financial arrangement granted to an executive as an incentive to stay in their job, or to ensure long-term cooperation after their departure. |
| **golden handshake** | A *golden handshake* is a generous sum of money given to a person when they leave a company or retire (sometimes given to encourage early retirement). |
| **golden opportunity** | A*golden opportunity* is a favourable time or an excellent occasion which should not be missed. *An internship in that company would be a golden opportunity for you - it might lead to a permanent job later.* |
| **golden parachute** | A*golden parachute* is a clause in an executive's employment contract stating that the executive will receive certain large benefits if their employment is terminated. |
| **golden rule** | The most important rule or principle to be remembered when doing something is called the *golden rule*. *When travelling abroad, the golden rule is to respect the local customs*. |
| **green fingers** | To have*green fingers* means to be good at gardening. *My dad was born with green fingers. He's great with plants.* |
| **green light** | If you *give or get the green light*, you give or get a signal or authorization to do something. *We're ready to launch the campaign as soon as we get the green light.* |
| **green with envy** | Someone who is*green with envy* is a person who is very envious. *Dave will be green with envy when he sees Simon's new sports car!* |
| **grey area (US: gray)** | To refer to something as *a grey area* means that it is not clear or easy to define, and is therefore difficult to deal with. *The law concerning email is still a grey area in some countries.* |
| **grey existance** | To have a*grey existence*means to lead a dull, monotonous life. *I feel sad for the old lady. She seems to have such a grey existence.* |
| **grey matter** | Grey matter refers to the brain, or the grey colour of brain tissue. *"Try using your grey matter and you might find the answer." said the teacher.* |

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| **pink elephants** | This term refers to hallucinations or strange imaginary things seen by people as a result of heavy drinking or the use of narcotics. *No more drinks for me please, otherwise I'll be seeing pink elephants!* |
| **in the *pink* of health** | If you are*in the pink of health*, you are in excellent physical condition. *Caroline looks in the pink of health after her holiday.* |
| **tickled pink** | If you are*tickled pink,* you are very pleased about something. *My dad was tickled pink when he was asked to announce the winner.* |
| **red carpet** | To *roll out the red carpet,* or *give someone the red-carpet treatment*, means to give special treatment to a  visitor of importance. *The management is going to roll out the red carpet for the visit of the Nobel prize winner.* |
| **red flag to a bull** | To say that a statement or action is like a *red flag to a bull* means that it is sure to make someone very angry or upset. *Don't mention Tom's promotion to Mike.  It would be like a red flag to a bull!* |
| **(caught)red-handed** | If a person is*caught red-handed,* they are caught while they are doing something wrong or illegal. *The boy was caught red-handed stealing chocolate in the supermarket.* |
| **red herring** | A *red herring*is a fact or argument introduced into a discussion which draws attention away from the main point. *Look, bureaucracy is a red herring. How to deal with the crisis is the important issue today.* |
| **red light district** | An area of a town or city where there is a concentration of sex shops, prostitution, strip clubs, etc. is known as the*red light district.* *A photograph of the politician taken in a red-light district caused a scandal.* |
| **red tape** | The term *red tape*refers to official rules and bureaucratic paperwork that prevent things from being done quickly. *If there wasn't so much red tape, the company would be up and running already.* |
| **in the *red*** | If a person or organisation is*in the red,* they owe money or have a negative account. *I'm afraid I can't lend you any money.  I'm in the red myself.* |
| **paint the town *red*** | If you *paint the town red,* you go out and enjoy a lively evening in bars, night-clubs, etc. *To celebrate the victory, the team's supporters painted the town red.* |
| **see *red*** | If someone*sees red*, they suddenly become very angry or annoyed. *Discrimination of any kind makes me see red.* |

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| **silver bullet** | This term refers to an extremely effective or magical solution to a difficult problem. *There is no silver bullet that will put an end to unemployment.* |
| **silver lining** | A *silver lining r*efers to the good or pleasant side-effects of an unpleasant situation. *'Every cloud has a silver lining' means that there is a positive or hopeful side to every unpleasant situation.* |
| **(born with) *silver*spoon in your mouth** | To say that someone is *born with a silver spoon in their mouth*means that their family is very rich and privileged. *Alice never has to worry about money;  she was born with a silver spoon in her mouth.* |
| **silver surfer** | A *silver surfer*is an elderly person who uses the internet. *After just a few questions my grandmother was ready to join the silver surfers.* |
| **silver-tongued** | A *silver-tongued* person is a smooth talker who speaks so convincingly that they manage to persuade others to do what they want. *A silver-tongued salesman persuaded my mother to buy a new washing machine although the one she had was fine!* |
| **shrinking *violet*** | A person referred to as*a shrinking violet* is a timid or shy person. *The witness was a shrinking violet who had difficulty expressing herself.* |
| **white Christmas** | A *white Christmas* is when it snows at Christmas and the ground is white. *We haven't had a white Christmas in twenty years.* |
| **white elephant** | If you call something*a white elephant,* you consider it useless although it may have cost a lot of money. *The new cultural centre is a real white elephant.  It's so isolated that nobody goes there!* |
| **white as a ghost/  a sheet** | A person who is *as white as a ghost (*or*a sheet)* looks very pale and frightened. *She went as white as a ghost when she saw the gun.* |
| **white lie** | If you *tell a white lie,* you say something which is not true in order to protect someone or to avoid hurting their feelings. *Some parents prefer to tell their children a white lie rather than announce bad news.* |
| **yellow-bellied** | A person who is*yellow-bellied* is cowardly, or not at all brave. *The bus was full of yellow-bellied passengers who disappeared when the driver was attacked by two youth*s. |

*English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions*

***Clothes***

(Idioms page 1:  below the belt → put on your thinking cap )

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| **below the belt** | An action or remark described as *below the belt* is considered to be unfair or cruel. *Politicians sometimes use personal information to hit their rivals below the belt.* |
| **tighten your belt** | If you need to *tighten your belt*, you must spend less money or be careful how you spend it because there is less available. *Another bill? I'll have to tighten my belt this month!* |
| **under one's*belt*** | If you have something *under your belt,*you have acquired experience or have satisfactorily achieved something. *You've got to have some work experience under your belt before you can hope to get a permanent job.* |
| **die with one's *boots*on** | A person who*dies with their boots on* dies while still leading an active life. *He says he'll never retire.  He'd rather die with his boots on!* |
| **too big for your *boots*(or britches)** | To say that a person is getting*too big for their boots* (or britches) means that you think they are behaving as if they were more important than they really are. *Tom is really getting too bit for his boots since he got a promotion - he hardly says hello any more!* |
| **hang up one's *boots*** | When a sports player *hangs up their boots*, they stop playing and retire. (This expression is often used to refer to retirement in general.) *Dad says he's going to hang up his boots at the end of the year.* |
| **lick someone's *boots*** | To say that one person is*licking another's boots* means that they are trying to please that person, often in order to obtain something. *Sam is licking the manager's boots in the hope of obtaining a pay rise.* |
| **tough as old *boots*** | If something, specially meat, is *(as) tough as old boots*, it is hard to cut and difficult to chew.  (This can also refer to a person who is strong either physically or in character.) *I was served a steak as tough as old boots.* |
| **cap in hand** | If you do something*cap in hand*, you ask for something in a very respectful manner. *They went to the teacher, cap in hand, and asked for more time to complete their project.* |
| **if the cap fits wear it** | You can say*'if the cap fits, wear it'* to let someone know that the critical remark they have just heard applies to them. "Are you referring to me?" "If the cap fits, wear it!" |
| **put on your thinking cap** | If you tell someone to *put their thinking cap*on, you ask them to find an idea or solve a problem by thinking about it. *Now here's this week's quiz;  it's time to put your thinking caps on!* |

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| **feather in one's*cap*** | To describe someone's achievement as a*feather in their cap*means that it is something they can be proud of. *The overwhelming victory of the team was a feather in the cap for the new manager.* |
| **pop one's *clogs*** | This is a euphemistic way of saying that a person is dead. *Nobody lives in that house since old Roger popped his clogs.* |
| **hot under *collar*** | If you get*hot under the collar,* you feel annoyed, indignant or embarrassed. *If anyone criticizes his proposals, Joe immediately gets hot under the collar.* |
| **of the *cuff*** | If you speak*off the cuff,* you say something without any previous thought or preparation. *He handles off-the-cuff interviews very well.* |
| **fit like a *glove*** | If something*fits like a glove*, it fits you perfectly. *I was lucky! The first skirt I tried on fitted me like a glove!* |
| **hand in glove** | Two or more people who are in collusion, or work in close association, are said to be*hand in glov*e. *After the match, it was discovered that he was hand in glove with the referee.* |
| **iron fist/hand in a velvet glove** | This expression is used to describe someone who, behind an appearance of gentleness, is inflexible and determined. *To impose the necessary reforms, the leader used persuasion followed by force - an iron fist in a velvet glove.* |
| **handle with kid *gloves*** | If you *handle someone with kid gloves*, or treat them very carefully or tactfully, either because they are very important or because they are easily upset. *He's so determined to obtain her agreement that he is handling her with kid gloves.* |
| **the *gloves* are off** | This expression is used when there are signs that a fight is about to start. *The two candidates are out of their seats.  The gloves are off!* |
| **at the drop of a *hat*** | If you do something *at the drop of a hat,* you do it immediately and without hesitation. *I've got great friends. They're ready to help out at the drop of a hat.* |
| **keep under one's *hat*** | To *keep something under one's hat* means to keep a secret. *My boss has promised me a promotion, but it's not official yet, so keep it under your hat.* |
| **take one's *hat* off to** | You say this to express admiration for something someone has done. *I take my hat off to the chef.  The meal was wonderful.* |

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| **throw / toss one's *hat*in the ring** | If you *throw or toss your hat in the ring*, you announce that you are going to enter a competition or take up a challenge. *He finally threw his hat in the ring and announced that he was going to stand for election.* |
| **wear many *hats*** | Someone who *wears many hats* has to do many different types of tasks or play a variety of roles. *Our company is small so the employees need to be flexible and accept to wear many hats*. |
| **get *knickers* in twist** | If you *get your knickers in a twist,* you are anxious, nervous, or angry faced with a difficult situation. *Don't get  your knickers in a twist!  Everything is under control.* |
| **off the *peg*** | Clothes that are bought *off the peg* are purchased in a standard size in a shop and are not made specially for you. *He can't afford to have his suits made to measure so he buys them off the peg.* |
| **ants in one's *pants*** | People who have*ants in their pants* are very restless or excited about something.  *I wish he'd relax. He's got ants in his pants about something today.* |
| **caught with *pants*down** | If you are *caught with your pants down*, you are caught doing something bad or forbidden. *Our neighbours were caught fiddling with the electricity meter - caught with their pants down!* |
| **pocket of resistance** | A small group of people you resist change or disagree with a proposal form *a pocket of resistance. The new boss wants to introduce job-sharing, but there's a pocket of resistance in the sales department.* |
| **have someone in your *pocket*** | If you have influence or power over someone, you*have them in your pocket.* *He was declared 'not guilty', but everyone knew that he had the jury in his pocket.* |
| **out of your own *pocket*** | If you pay for something *out of your own pocket*, you cover the cost with your own money. *Breakfast is included but you must pay for lunch out of your own pocket.* |
| **suit every *pocket*** | This term refers to the amount of money you are able to spend or the price you can afford. *The store offers a wide range of computers at prices to suit every pocket.* |
| **deep *pockets*** | A person or organisation who has a lot of money has *deep pockets.* *Andy's business is not doing well at the moment.  He says he needs a friend with deep pockets!* |
| **give the *shirt* off one's back** | This expression is used to describe a kind-hearted or generous person who would give you anything he/she owns to help you. *Mike would give the shirt off his back to help a friend in difficulty.* |

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| **keep your *shirt* on!** | If you tell somebody to*keep their shirt on*, you are asking them to calm down. *Keep your shirt on Bob. Just give your version of the story!* |
| **shoe is on the other foot** | When the circumstances have reversed and one person is now doing what the other did in the past, you can say that the *shoe is on the other foot.* *I used to advise my children to eat healthy food.  Now my daughter is a nutritionist and the shoe in on the other foot - she advises me!* |
| **in someone's *shoes*** | To talk about being*in someone's shoes* means to imagine how you would react if you were in a similar situation. *Tom's sales have dropped by 30% this month.  I wouldn't like to be in his shoes!* |
| **step into someone's *shoes*** | If you *step into someone's shoes,* you take over a job or position held by someone else before you. *William has been trained to step into his father's shoes when he retires.* |
| **where the *shoe*pinches** | When people talk about*'where the shoe pinches'*, they are referring to an area that is often a source of problems or difficulties. *She's sure the public transport system works perfectly, but she'll find out where the shoe pinches when she starts using it!* |
| **on a*shoestring*** | If you do something*on a shoestring,* you do it with very little money. *When I was a student I lived on a shoestring.* |
| **an ace up one's*sleeve*** | If you have *an ace up your sleeve*, you have something in reserve with which you can gain an advantage. *Our new product is an ace up our sleeve.* |
| **laugh up your*sleeve*** | If you*laugh up your sleeve*, you are secretly amused at another person's problems or difficulties. *Tom felt that his demonstration was confusing and that his colleague was laughing up his sleeve.* |
| **roll up your *sleeves*** | When you*roll up your sleeves,* you get ready for hard work. *The house was in a mess after the party so we had to roll up our sleeves and start cleaning.* |
| **knock your *socks* off** | If something amazes you, or impresses you greatly, it*knocks your socks off.* *The magnitude of the project will knock the socks off everyone in the office.* |
| **swishing (party)** | *Swishing* is the name given to a recent fashion phenomenon - a party organised to swap second hand clothes.  Everyone takes along clothes they no longer wear and people can then choose the ones they want. |
| **black *tie* event** | This expression refers to a formal event at which men are required to wear a dinner jacket, or tuxedo, and a black bow tie. *I need to know if it's going to be a casual get-together or a black tie event*. |
| **wear the*trousers*(or pants)** | The partner in a couple who*wears the trouser*s is the one who makes all the important decisions. *The salesman hesitated before the couple. It was difficult to see who wore the trousers.* |

*English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions*

***Choices - Options - Alternatives***

(Choices Idioms page 1 :   about turn   → horns of a dilemma)

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| **about turn / about face** | This term refers to a complete change of opinion or policy. *The ambassador's recent declarations indicate an about turn in foreign policy.* |
| **any port in a storm** | When you have no choice, *any port in a storm* refers to a solution you accept, which in normal circumstances you would find unacceptable. *The hotel was substandard, but it was a case of any port in a storm;  all the others were full.* |
| **argue the toss** | If you *argue the toss*, you dispute a decision or choice which has already been made. *The final choice was made yesterday, so don't argue the toss now!* |
| **between the devil and the deep blue sea** | If you are *between the devil and the deep blue sea*, you are in a situation where there are to equally unpleasant alternatives. *When the new product didn't take off, the management was caught between the devil and the deep blue sea : develop a new marketing campaign or drop the product.* |
| **as broad as it's long** | This expression means that there is no real difference which alternative is chosen. *Take the high-speed train, or fly and take a taxi? It's as broad as it's long.* |
| **catch 22** | A *catch 22* situation refers to a frustrating situation where you cannot do one thing without doing a second, and you cannot do the second before doing the first. *I can't get a job without a work permit, and I can't get a work permit without a job.  It's a catch 22 situation!* |
| **cherry pick** | When you*cherry pick,* you choose something with great care and select only the best. *Top university graduates are often cherry-picked by large companies.* |
| **different strokes for different folks** | Each individual has their own tastes and requirements. What suits one person may not suit another. *Alison really enjoys gardening, whereas Julie finds it a chore.* *Different strokes for different folks!* |
| **embarrassment of riches** | When there is much more of something than necessary, and it is difficult to make a choice, you have an *embarrassment of riches.* *Our hosts presented us with an embarrassment of riches. There was so much food that we didn't know where to start!* |
| **fait accompli** | This French expression refers to something that has been done and cannot be changed. *He used his savings to buy a motorbike and then presented his parents with a fait accompli.* |
| **on the fence** | When faced with a choice, a person who is *on the fence* has not yet reached a decision. *The candidates have such similar ideas that many electors are still on the fence.* |
| **hedge your bets** | If you*hedge your bets,* you choose two or more courses of action  in order to reduce the risk of loss or error. *The company hedged its bets by developing a second line of products.* |
| **horns of a dilemma** | If you are *on the horns of a dilemma*, you are faced with a choice between two equally unpleasant options. *I'm on the horns of a dilemma; I have to choose between a boring job with a good salary or a more interesting job with a lower salary*. |

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| **in a quandary** | If you are*in a quandary* about something, you  find it difficult to decide what to do. *The job they offer is less interesting but the salary is better.  I'm in a quandary about what to do.* |
| **in two minds** | If you are*in two minds* about something, you have difficulty deciding what to do. *I'm in two minds about whether or not to accept the offer.* |
| **keep your options open** | When you*keep your options open*, you postpone making a decision so that you can choose among several possible courses of action. *The offer sounds good, but keep your options open until you're sure it's the best choice.* |
| **know your own mind** | If you*know your own mind,* you know what you want or like, and are capable of making a decision. *I don't want to influence you.  You're old enough to know your own mind.* |
| **lesser of two evils** | If you choose*the lesser of two evils*, you opt for the less unpleasant of two poor options. *I didn't want to go. Choosing the train instead of driving was the lesser of two evils; at least I could relax on the way.* |
| **line of least resistance** | If you opt for*the line of least resistance*, you choose the easiest way of doing something. *To make sure the children would stay inside, he chose the line of least resistance and rented a film.* |
| **luck of the draw** | To refer to something that happens as *the luck of the draw* means that it is the result of pure chance, with no possibility of choice. *The samples distributed varied in size and value; it was the luck of the draw.* |
| **my way or the highway** | If you say to someone*'it's my way or the highway',*you are telling them that either they accept to do as you say or they leave the project. *You don't have much choice when someone says: 'it's my way or the highway.'!* |
| **no-brainer** | A decision or choice that requires little or no thought, because the best option is so obvious, is called a *no-brainer.* *The choice was between a cash refund or having the amount credited to my account - it was a no-brainer!  I took the cash!* |
| **plan B** | *Plan B* is an alternative solution to be adopted if one's original plan does not succeed. *The idea is to get a caterer to provide the food.  If that's too expensive, plan B is to organise a buffet with the help of friends.* |
| **point of no return** | When you reach the *point of no return*, you have no option but to continue what you have started, because you have gone so far that it is impossible to go back. *I've resigned from teaching and decided to become a writer. Now I've reached the point of no return and must work on the book I am writing.* |
| **take pot luck** | If you *take pot luck,* you accept whatever is available without knowing what it will be like. *We were so hungry we decided to take pot luck and stopped at the first restaurant we saw.* |
| **take a stand** | When you*take a stand*, you adopt a firm position on an issue and publicly declare whether you support it or are against it. *The politician was asked to take a stand on the government's proposed measures to curb illegal immigration.* |
| **test the water(s)** | If you *test the water(s)*, you try to find out how acceptable or successful something is before becoming involved in it. *You should go to a gym class to test the water before enrolling.* |
| **shotgun approach** | If you use *a shotgun approach,*you cover a wide range in a non-selective, haphazard and inefficient manner. *Identifying a specific segment of the market as our target will be more effective than a shotgun approach.* |
| **toss-up** | When there are two options or possibilities to choose from, and both are equally good, the choice between the two is called a *toss-up* (like tossing a coin). *Both boxers are in excellent condition. It's a toss-up which of them will win.* |
| **weigh the pros and cons** | If you *weigh the pros and cons*, you consider the advantages and disadvantages, the arguments for or against something. *They weighed the pros and cons of the house before signing.* |

*English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions*

***Business - Work***

(Idioms, page 1 :  ace up your sleeve  → bricks and mortar )

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| **ace up your sleeve** | If you have *an ace up your sleeve*, you have something in reserve with which you can gain an advantage. *Our new product is an ace up our sleeve.* |
| **hold all the aces** | A person who *holds all the aces* is in a very strong position because they have more advantages than anyone else. *Given the high unemployment rates today, employers hold all the aces.* |
| **ambulance chaser** | A lawyer who finds work by persuading people injured in accidents to claim money from the person who caused the accident is called an*'ambulance chaser'.* *Peterson and Scott are well-known ambulance chasers - that's how they make their money!* |
| **back to the salt mines** | Saying that you have to go *back to the sale mines* is a humorous way of talking about returning to work, usually with some reluctance. *We get two days off at Christmas and then it's back to the salt mines!* |
| **bait and switch** | This term refers to a deceptive commercial practice of advertising a low-priced item to attract customers, then telling them that the product is out of stock and persuading them to buy a more expensive article. *This store is famous for its bait and switch tactics.* |
| **in the *black*** | To say that a person or organisation is*in the black* means that they are financially sound, have a positive balance on their account and that they owe no money. |
| **black market** | The *black market* refers to the illegal buying and selling of goods or currencies. *Be careful of what you buy on the black market - it's not always good quality.* |
| **blamestorming** | A discussion among a group of people who try to determine who or what is to blame for a particular mistake, failure or wrongdoing, is called *'blamestorming*'. *A blamestorming session took place following the unfavourable reviews in the press.* |
| **blank cheque** | If you give someone a*blank cheque*, you authorize them to do what they think is best in a difficult situation. *Tom was given a blank cheque and told to negotiate the best deal possible.* |
| **blue chip company** | This term refers to a company with a solid reputation for the quality of its products and the stability of its growth and earnings. *It's usually safe to invest in a blue chip company.* |
| **above board** | If a situation or business is described as*above board*, it is open, honest and legal. *There are not secret negotiations.  Our dealings have always been above board.* |
| **boil the ocean** | To “boil the ocean” means to waste time on a task or project that is unnecessary, not worth doing or impossible to achieve. *“I expect you to do the job well but don’t try to boil the ocean!”* |
| **get down to *brass*tacks** | When people*get down to brass tacks*, they start to discuss the essential aspects of a problem or situation. *The situation was so serious that after a few polite exchanges they quickly got down to brass tacks.* |
| **break your back** | If you work extremely hard, or put a lot of effort into achieving something, you *break your back* to do it. *If you want the job done well, you should accept to pay more.  He's not going to break his back for such a low price!* |
| **bricks and mortar / bricks and clicks** | An established trading company (office/shop) is referred to as a *'brick-and-mortar'* business. *'Click companies*' refer to internet-based operations. Companies which do both are called*'bricks and clicks'. Click businesses are usually more flexible than brick-and-mortar operations.* |

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| **business as usual** | After an unpleasant or unexpected event, this expression means that everything is continuing in a normal way, in spite of the difficulties. *It was business as usual at the supermarket the day after the hold-up.* |
| **business before pleasure** | This expression means that it is considered preferable to finish one's work before going to relax and enjoy oneself. *I'd love to have lunch with you  but I've got a report to finish - business before pleasure I'm afraid!* |
| **business is business** | This is a way of saying that in financial and commercial matters, friendship or personal feelings should not be allowed to have any influence. *I'll hire your brother only if he is the best candidate. I'm sorry but business is business!* |
| **can't stand the pace** | If you *can't stand the pace*, you are unable to do things well when there is a lot of pressure. *She once worked for a famous fashion designer but she couldn't stand the pace.* |
| **carve out a niche** | A person or company who *carves out a niche* concentrates on a particular segment of the market, to which they supply a product or service, and develop their expertise in that area. *In today's competitive market it is better to carve out a niche and try to become the best in that area.* |
| **cash cow** | A product or service which is a regular source of income for a company is called a*cash cow.* *His latest invention turned out to be a real cash cow.* |
| **cash in your chips** | If you*cash in your chips*, you sell something, especially shares, either because you need the money or because you think the value is going to fall. *Andy cashed in his chips as soon as business started to slow down.* |
| **too many *chiefs,* not enough Indians** | This expression refers to a situation where there are too many people giving instructions and not enough people doing the work. *The business wasn't successful.  There were too many chiefs and not enough Indians.* |
| **clinch a deal** | In a business relationship, if you *clinch a deal*, you reach agreement on a proposal or offer. *Paul's final argument enabled us to clinch the deal.* |
| **cog in the machine** | If you say that someone is *a cog in the machine*, you mean that, while they are necessary, they only play a small part in an organisation or plan. *The police quickly realized that the suspect was just a cog in the machine.* |
| **make cold calls** | If you make *cold calls*, you telephone potential customers from a list of people you do not know. *In my first job I had to make cold calls using the telephone directory.* |
| **copper-bottomed** | To describe something such as a plan, a contract or a financial arrangement as *copper-bottomed* means that it is completely safe or reliable. *He signed a copper-bottomed agreement with a distributor.* |

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| **corner the market** | If a company dominates an area of business, and leaves no room for competition, it is said to have *cornered the market.* *By importing large quantities and selling at low prices, they have cornered the market.* |
| **creative accounting** | This term refers to the presentation of a company's results in a way that, although generally legal, glosses over the problems and makes the results appear better than they are. *It was suggested that some creative accounting might help to attract investors.* |
| **cut and dried** | If you refer to a situation, problem or solution as *cut and dried,* you mean that it is clear and straightforward with no likely complications. *When the new manager arrived, he didn't find the situation as cut and dried as he had expected.* |
| **cutting edge** | This expression refers to the newest, most advanced stage in the development of something. *The company is at the cutting edge of aeronautics.* |
| **dead wood** | The term *dead wood*refers to people or things which are no longer considered useful or necessary. *The new manager wants to reduce costs by cutting out the dead wood.* |
| **do the spadework** | Someone who *does the spadework*does the preparatory work or the preliminary research. *Although I did all the spadework, my name was never mentioned.* |
| **dog eat dog** | This expression refers to intense competition and rivalry in pursuit of one's own interests, with no concern for morality. *The business world is tough today. There's a general dog-eat-dog attitude.* |
| **in the *doldrums*** | To say that a person, a business or the economy in general is *in the doldrums* means that the situation is gloomy and that nothing new is happening. *Despite the recent measures, the economy is in the doldrums.* |
| **a *done* deal** | This expression is used to refer to an agreement or decision which has been reached on a certain matter. *We're still considering several proposals, so it's not a done deal yet.* |
| **done and dusted** | When a project, task or activity is *done and dusted*, it is completely finished or ready. *I've nearly finished preparing the presentation.  When it's all done and dusted I'll be able to relax.* |
| **donkey work** | This expression is used to describe the unpleasant, repetitive or boring parts of a job. I*do the donkey work - my boss gets the credit!* |
| **doom and gloom** | A general atmosphere of pessimism, and a feeling that the situation is not going to improve, is referred to as *doom and gloom*. *Fortunately it's not doom and gloom for all businesses, in spite of the economic situation.* |
| **down the drain** | To say that money, time or energy has gone *down the drain*means that it has been wasted or lost. *His years of research went down the drain when the company went bankrupt.* |
| **drastic times call for drastic measures** | When faced with a difficult situation, it is sometimes necessary to take actions which in normal circumstances would appear extreme A*fter Johnny's third accident, his father confiscated his car. Drastic times call for drastic measures!* |

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| **dream ticket** | If you refer to two people as a*dream ticket*, you think they would work well together and be successful. *Clinton and Obama teaming up for the elections would be a dream ticket  for many Democrats.* | | |
| **dry /dummy run** | If you organise a rehearsal, a trial exercise or a practice session of something, in realistic conditions, to see how well it will work before it is launched, you do a*dry run. Let's do a dry run of the ceremony to make sure everything goes smoothly.* | | |
| **above the call of *duty*** | If a person does something which is *over and above the call of duty*, they show a greater degree of courage or effort than is usually required or expected in their job. *The fire-fighter received a medal for his action which went above and beyond the call of duty*. | | |
| **eager beaver** | The term*eager beaver* refers to a person who is hardworking and enthusiastic, sometimes considered overzealous. *The new accountant works all the time -  first to arrive and last to leave. He's a real eager beaver!* | | |
| **elbow grease** | If you use*elbow grease*, you need energy and strength to do physical work such as cleaning or polishing. *It took a considerable amount of elbow grease to renovate the old house.* | | |
| **farm something out** | If something, such as work, is*farmed out*, it is sent out to be done by others. *We farmed out the packaging to another company.* | | |
| **finger in every pie** | If someone has a finger in every pie, they are involved in many activities. *For information about the activities in this town, you should talk to John Brown.  He's got a finger in every pie.* | | |
| **work your *fingers* to the bone** | A person who*works their fingers to the bone* is extremely hardworking. *He deserves his success; he worked his fingers to the bone when he started the business.* | | |
| **foot in the door** | To say that someone has a*foot in the door* means that they have a small but successful start in something and will possibly do well in the future. *With today's unemployment, it is difficult to get a foot in the door in any profession.* | | |
| **get a*foothold*** | If you*get a foothold* somewhere, you secure a position for yourself in a business, profession or organisation. *The contract got the firm a foothold in the local administration.* | | |
| **free hand** | If you *have a free hand*, you have permission to make your own decisions, especially in a job. *My boss gave me a free hand in the choice of supplier.* | | |
| **funny business** | A business which is conducted in a deceitful, dishonest or unethical manner is called*funny business*. *I've got suspicions about that association.  I think they're up to some funny business.* | | |
| **get your hands dirty** | If you *get your hands dirty* in your job, you become involved in all aspects of it, including work that is physical, unpleasant or less interesting. *His willingness to get his hands dirty won the respect and approval of the whole team.* | | |
| **get something off the ground** | | If you*get something off the ground,*you put it into operation after having organised it. *After a lot of hard work, we finally got the campaign off the ground.* |
| **get the show on the road** | | If you manage to put a plan or idea into action, you *get the show on the road.* *OK, we've got all we need, so let's get the show on the road.* |
| **give someone a run a run for their money** | | If you*give someone a run for their money,* you present strong competition in circumstances where the other person expects to win easily. *We didn't get the contract but we gave our competitors a run for their money!* |
| **go belly up** | | If a business or project *goes belly up*, it is unsuccessful or goes bankrupt. *The restaurant went belly up before the end of the first year.* |
| **go for a song** | | If something*goes for a song,*it is sold at an unexpectedly low price. *I was able to buy the car simply because it was going for a song.* |
| **go out of business** | | If a shop, firm or enterprise *goes out of business*, it closes down or goes bankrupt. *If the new road bypasses the town, a lot of shops will go out of business.* |
| **going concern** | | A business or activity that is dynamic and successful is a*going concern. They opened a coffee shop that is a going concern today.* |
| **golden handcuffs** | | The term *golden handcuffs* refers to a large sum of money or a generous financial arrangement granted to an executive as an incentive to stay in their job, or to ensure long-term cooperation after their departure. |
| **golden handshake** | | A *golden handshake* is a generous sum of money given to a person when they leave a company or retire (sometimes given to encourage early retirement). |
| **golden opportunity** | | A*golden opportunity* is a favourable time or an excellent occasion which should not be missed. *An internship in that company would be a golden opportunity for you - it might lead to a permanent job later.* |
| **golden parachute** | | A*golden parachute* is a clause in an executive's employment contract stating that the executive will receive certain large benefits if their employment is terminated. |
| **grease someone's palm** | | If you accuse someone of*greasing somebody's palm*, you are accusing them of giving money to someone in order to gain an unfair advantage or to obtain something they want. *In some countries, it is common practice to grease government officials' palms.* |
| **one *hand* washes the other(together they wash the face)** | | This expression means that when people cooperate and work well together, there is a better chance of a achieving results. |
| **upper *hand*** | | If a person or organisation*gains* or *gets the upper hand*, especially in a fight or competition, they take control over something. *We increased our market share and gained the upper hand over our competitors.* |

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| **all *hands* on deck** | When there is a need for *all hands on deck*, everyone must help, especially if there's a lot of work to be done in a short amount of time. *As the opening day approached, it was all hands on deck to have everything ready in time.* |
| **have one's *hands* tied** | If a person has their *hands tied,*something such as an agreement or a rule is preventing them from doing what they would like to do. *Mark deserves to earn more, but the manager's hands are tied by the recent salary agreement.* |
| **hive of activity / beehive** | A place where there are lots of things happening, and everyone is very busy, is called *a hive of activity. When I went to offer help, the kitchen was already a hive of activity.* |
| **hold the fort** | When you *hold the fort,* you look after a place or a business in the absence of the person who is normally in charge. *Rosie, could you hold the fort please while I go to the post office?* |
| **household name/word** | When the name of something becomes very familiar because it is so often used, it is called a *household nam*e or*word*. *The product was so successful that its name became a household word in no time.* |
| **irons in the fire** | If you have a few, or many,*irons in the fire*, you are involved in several projects at the same time. *The travel agency is not his only venture - he's got more than one iron in the fire.* |
| **hit the ground running** | If someone *hits the ground running*, they are ready and eager to start immediately on a new activity. *He intends to hit the ground running when he starts his new job.* |
| **jump on the bandwagon** | If a person or organisation*jumps on the bandwagon*, they decide to do something when it is already successful or fashionable. *When organic food became popular, certain stores were quick to jump on the bandwagon and promote it.* |
| **keep head above water** | To keep*one's head above water* means to try to survive by staying out of debt, for example a small business. *Business has been slow, but we've managed to keep our head above water.* |
| **knuckle down** | If someone *knuckles down to something*, they start to work on it seriously. *If you want to succeed, you'll have to knuckle down to some serious work.* |
| **lame duck** | A person or organisation in difficulty and unable to manage without help is called *a lame duck.* *Some banks have become lame ducks recently.* |
| **left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing** | To say that*'the left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing'*means that within a group or organisation, communication is so bad that one person doesn't know what another person is doing. |
| **licence to print money** | This expression refers to an officially authorized activity which enables people to make a lot of money without much effort. *The contract to supply computers to schools was a licence to print money!* |

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| **make hay while the sun shines** | This expression is used as an encouragement to take advantage of a good situation which may not last. *Successful athletes are advised to make hay while the sun shines*. |
| **mix business with pleasure** | When people *mix business with pleasure*, they combine work and leisure or social activities. *Seminars or training sessions that include leisure activities are a good way of mixing business and pleasure.* |
| **money spinner** | If an activity is a *money spinner*, it is a very successful way of making money. *Washing cars was quite a money spinner when I was a student.* |
| **monkey business** | An activity which is organised in a deceitful or dishonest way is called *monkey business.* *The results announced seem suspicious - I think there's some monkey business going on.* |
| **move the goalposts** | During a course of action, if someone *moves the goalposts* they change the rules or conditions. *Our objectives have been set for next year.  Let's hope the boss doesn't move the goalposts halfway through.* |
| **movers and shakers** | The term *movers and shakers* refers to people in power who take an active part in making things happen. *Mover and shakers  are assembling in Brussels for the summit.* |
| **nitty-gritty** | When people *get down to the nitty-gritty*, they begin to discuss the most important points or the practical details. *I was interested in the project, but we didn't get down to the nitty-gritty until his partner arrived.* |
| **nuts and bolts** | The *nuts and bolts* of something are the detailed facts and the practical aspects. *We need to discuss the nuts and bolts of the proposal before going any further.* |
| **opposite number** | A person who holds the same position as oneself in another company or organisation is called one's *opposite numbe*r. *I spoke to my opposite number in several local companies and we all agreed to join the anti-pollution campaign.* |
| **ostrich strategy/policy** | Someone who adopts an *ostrich strategy or policy*chooses to ignore or evade an obvious problem in the hope that it will resolve itself or disappear. *Adopting an ostrich strategy will only make matters worse - we've got to find a solution.* |
| **overplay your hand** | If you *overplay your hand*, you are overconfident and spoil your chances of success by trying to obtain too much. *Sam is hoping for a bonus for his good results, but he may be overplaying his hand if he asks for a promotion.* |
| **pass the buck** | If you say that someone is*passing the buck,* you are accusing them of not taking responsibility for a problem and letting others deal with it instead. *Whenever a customer comes to complain, she always finds a way of looking busy - a great way of passing the buck!* |
| **pass muster** | If someone or something *passes muster,* they are considered to be satisfactory or acceptable. *The interview went well.  I hope I'll pass muster.* |

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| **pick up steam** | If a project or process *picks up steam,* it starts to develop or become more active. *The campaign started slowly but picked up steam after Christmas.* |
| **piece of the action** | When someone wants*a piece of the action*, they want to participate in what other people are doing and benefit from it. *The songwriter thought the show would be a success so he wanted a piece of the action.* |
| **in the pipeline** | If something is*in the pipeline,* it is currently in progress or being organised. *A new version is in the pipeline at the moment.* |
| **play the market** | If you *play the market*, you buy stocks and shares in the hope of making a profit when you sell them. *It's always tempting to play the market, but it's more risky at the present time.* |
| **pull your weight** | To say that somebody*pulls their weigh*t means that they do their fair share of the work. *It's great working with Sandra. She always pulls her weight.* |
| **put your shoulder to the wheel** | If you *put your shoulder to the wheel,* you start putting a lot of effort into a difficult task. *We'll have to put our shoulders to the wheel to deliver the goods on time*. |
| **red tape** | The term *red tape*refers to official rules and bureaucratic paperwork that prevent things from being done quickly. *If there wasn't so much red tape, the company would be up and running already.* |
| **roaring trade** | If you*do a roaring trade,*your business is very successful. *Cosmetic surgeons are doing a roaring trade these days.* |
| **roll up your sleeves** | When you*roll up your sleeves,* you get ready for hard work. *The house was in a mess after the party so we had to roll up our sleeves and start cleaning.* |
| **learn the ropes** | If you*learn the ropes*, you learn how to do a particular job correctly. *He's a smart kid.  It won't take him long to learn the ropes.* |
| **seal of approval** | If a project or contract receives a *seal of approval,* it receives formal support or approval from higher authorities. *We can't conclude the deal without the director's seal of approval.* |
| **second a motion** | During a meeting, if you *second a motion,* you formally agree with a proposal. *She seconded the motion to introduce flexible working hours.* |
| **sell ice to Eskimos** | This expression is used to describe a person who has the ability to persuade someone to accept something totally unnecessary or useless.  *It's not surprising he was named 'salesman of the year'. He could sell ice to Eskimos!* |
| **send up a trial balloon** | If you test something such as an idea, a project or a product, to see how people respond to it, you *send up a trial balloon*. *The idea seemed excellent but when they sent up a trial balloon the reaction was very negative.* |
| **separate the sheep from the goats** | If you *separate the sheep from the goats,* you examine a group of people and decide which are suitable and which are not. *Examining job applications is the first stage in separating the sheep from the goats.* |
| **set the stage for** | If you*set the stage f*or an event or a development, you create conditions that allow it to happen. *The agreement set the stage for their future working relationship.* |
| **shape up or ship out** | This expression is used to warn someone that if they do not improve, they will have to leave their job. *When Tom started neglecting the customers, he was told to shape up or ship out.* |

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| **shotgun approach** | If you use *a shotgun approach,*you cover a wide range in a non-selective, haphazard and inefficient manner. *Identifying a specific segment of the market as our target will be more effective than a shotgun approach.* |
| **sign on dotted line** | If you *sign on the dotted line,* you formally give your consent to something by signing an official document. *I consulted a lawyer before signing on the dotted line.* |
| **signed, sealed, and delivered** | When an agreement, contract or treaty is *signed, sealed and delivered*, all the legal documents are in order. *It is hoped that the agreement will be signed, sealed and delivered before the end of the week.* |
| **skeleton staff / crew** | If a business or organisation works with *a skeleton staff,* it is run with the smallest number of people necessary. *The office is closed the week after Christmas but there will be a skeleton staff to handle essential operations.* |
| **sleeping/silent partner** | This term refers to a person who invests in a business without taking an active part in its management, and whose association with the enterprise is not public knowledge. *He works alone but his business is partly financed by a sleeping partner.* |
| **slice/share of the cake** | When people feel entitled to a share of the profits or benefits, they want a (larger) *slice of the cake (or pie)*. *Since profits are higher this year, the workers feel they deserve a bigger slice of the cake.* |
| **smokestack industries** | Industries involved in heavy manufacturing such as the production of iron and steel, especially if they cause a lot of pollution, are called*smokestack industries.* *Smokestack industries are no longer authorized  in residential areas.* |
| **smooth waters** | A business or operation that is*in smooth waters* is making regular and easy progress. *The company seems to be in smooth waters these days.* |
| **speed networking** | This term refers to a relatively new urban trend which consists in making a potential business contact by briefly talking to a series of people at an organised event and exchanging contact details. |
| **square deal** | A transaction that is fair and honest, or an equitable arrangement, is called *a square deal.* *We've used the same supplier for years and we always get a square deal.* |
| **start the ball rolling** | If you *start the ball rolling,* you begin an activity in which other people will join. *Let's start the ball rolling by calling on our first speaker.* |
| **steal a march** | If you*steal a march on someone,*you do something in an unexpected or secret way that enables you to gain an advantage over them. *We were able to steal a march on other retailers by immediately offering a 10% reduction on orders received the first day.* |
| **step into the breach** | If you*step into the breach,* you do work that someone else is unexpectedly unable to do. *Steve stepped into the breach when his colleague had a car accident.* |

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| **step into someone's shoes** | | If you *step into someone's shoes,* you take over a job or position held by someone else before you. *William has been trained to step into his father's shoes when he retires.* |
| **strictly business** | | An appointment or event that is entirely devoted to business, with no leisure or relaxation, is called*strictly business.* *Yes we had lunch together but it was strictly business.* |
| **sweat of your brow** | | If you earn or achieve something *by the sweat of your brow,*you do it through hard work and no help. *I got a comfortable lifestyle by the sweat of my brow - I owe it to nobody but myself!* |
| **sweetheart deal** | | The term *sweetheart deal* is used to refer to an abnormally lucrative arrangement between two parties. Opponents say the contract was awarded to the builder as part of a sweetheart deal, and is therefore illegal. |
| **take the floor** | | When someone*takes the floor,* they rise to make a speech or presentation. *'When I take the floor, my speech will be short.' he said.* |
| **take a nosedive** | | If something *takes a nosedive,* it drops or decreases in value very rapidly. *The stock market took a nosedive when the property market began to weaken.* |
| **take offline** | | If you suggest that a subject be *taken offline* (during a meeting for example), you consider that it is a separate issue and should be discussed at another time. *Peter, you're confusing things, so let's take that offline shall we?* |
| **talk shop** | | If you*talk shop,* you talk about your work or business in a social situation with someone you work with, and make the conversation boring for the others present. *I never go out with my colleagues because we inevitably end up talking shop.* |
| **there for the taking** | | If something is*there for the taking,* it is easy to obtain. *When our main competitor went out of business, the market segment was there for the taking.* |
| **things are looking up** | | To say that*things are looking up* means that the situation is improving and you feel more positive about the future. *Andy has got two job interviews next week so things are looking up.* |
| **throw over the wall** | | If someone*throws something over the wall,* they deal with part of a problem or project, then pass the responsibility to another person or department without any communication or coordination. *You can't just manufacture a product then throw it over the wall to the sales department!* |
| **too many chiefs*,* not enough Indians** | | This expression refers to a situation where there are too many people giving instructions and not enough people doing the work. *The business wasn't successful.  There were too many chiefs and not enough Indians.* |
| **too much like hard work** | | An activity or task that requires too much effort is *too much like hard work.* *It's so hot today, there's no way I'm going to do any cooking.  That's too much like hard work!* |
| **trade secret** | This term refers to the secrecy of a company's production methods but is often used teasingly. *"Can you give me the recipe for your lemon meringue pie?"  " No way - that's a trade secret!"* | |
| **tricks of the trade** | This term refers to a clever or expert way of doing things, especially in a job. *He's a tough negotiator;  he knows all the tricks of the trade.* | |
| **up and running** | If a business or a project is *up and running*, it has started and is fully operational. *In some countries you can have a company up and running in a very short time.* | |
| **nothing ventured, nothing gained** | You cannot expect to achieve anything is you risk nothing. *He's going to ask his boss for a promotion even though he has little chance of obtaining satisfaction.  Nothing ventured, nothing gained!* | |
| **walking papers** | If you are given your*walking papers,* your contract or a relationship has ended. *After causing a diplomatic incident, Carter got his walking papers.* | |
| **wear many hats** | Someone who *wears many hats* has to do many different types of tasks or play a variety of roles. *Our company is small so the employees need to be flexible and accept to wear many hats*. | |
| **wheeling and dealing** | Someone accused of wheeling and dealing is though to be involved in complicated, if not dishonest, deals in business or politics. *Since the beginning of the election campaign, there's been a lot of wheeling and dealing going on.* | |
| **win-win** | The term*win-win* refers to a situation or proposition where both or all parties benefit from the outcome. *There were smiles all round when the contract was signed - it was a win-win situation.* | |
| **have your work cut out** | If you have to face a difficult task or a challenging situation, you *have your work cut out*for you. *I've got a month to reorganise the accounts department.  I have my work cut out for me!* | |

*English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions*

***Beauty - Appearance***

(Idioms :   cut a dash  →  vertically challenged )

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| **cut a dash** | If a person*cuts a dash*, they make a striking impression by their appearance and attractive clothes. *Wearing his uniform, my grandfather cut a dash on his wedding day.* |
| **deck out** | If you *deck out* someone or something, you dress or decorate them in a special way. *Paul decked out his car for the occasion.* |
| **dressed to kill** | When someone, especially a woman, is *dressed to kill*, they are wearing very fashionable or glamorous clothes intended to attract attention. *She arrived at the reception dressed to kill.* |
| **dressed up to the nines** | Someone *dressed up to the nines* is wearing very smart or glamorous clothes. *Caroline must be going to a party - she's dressed up to the nines.* |
| **down at heel** | A person who is *down-at-heel*is someone whose appearance is untidy or neglected because of lack of money. *The down-at-heel student I first met became a successful writer.* |
| **face like a bulldog chewing a wasp** | To say that someone has a*face like a bulldog chewing a wasp*means that you find them very unattractive because they have a screwed-up ugly expression on their face. *Not only was he rude but he had a face like a bulldog chewing a wasp!* |
| **face only a mother could love** | This is a humoristic way of saying that someone is ugly or unattractive. *The poor guy has a face only a mother could love.* |
| **face that would stop a clock** | Someone who has a*face that would stop a clock* has a shockingly unattractive face. *You'll recognize him - he's tall and thin, with a face that would stop a clock!* |
| **five o'clock shadow** | This expression refers to a patch of stubble on the face of a man who hasn't shaved for at least a day. *He looked tired and had a five o'clock shadow.* |
| **not a *hair* out of place** | To say that someone does *not have a hair out of place* means that their appearance is perfect. *Angela is always impeccably dressed - never a hair out of place!* |
| **look a sight** | If a person*looks a sight,* their appearance is awful, unsuitable or very untidy. *She looks a sight in that dress!* |
| **look like a million dollars** | If you *look like a million dollars*, you look extremely good. *With a tan and a new hairstyle she looked a million dollars!* |
| **mutton dressed as lamb** | This expression refers to a middle-aged woman who tries to look younger by dressing in clothes designed for younger people. *The style doesn't suit her - it has a mutton-dressed-as-lamb effect on her!* |
| **pretty as a picture** | Someone who is (as) “pretty as a picture’ is very attractive or appealing in appearance. *The young bride looked (as) pretty as a picture in her beautiful dress.* |
| **(all) skin and bone** | If someone is *all skin and bone*, they are very thin or too thin. *After trekking in the Himalayas, he was all skin and bone.* |
| **thin on the top** | If someone, usually a man, is*thin on the top*, they are losing their hair or going bald. *Dad's gone a bit thin on the top in the last few years*. |
| **(as) ugly as sin** | This expression is used to refer to people or things that are considered to be very unattractive. *Have you seen the new neighbour's dog? It's as ugly as sin!* |
| **vertically challenged** | This term is a humoristic way of referring to someone who is not very tall. *High shelves are difficult for vertically challenged shoppers.* |

*English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions*

***Authority - Power***

(Idioms, page 1 :   big fish in a small pond  →  with a heavy hand )

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| **big fish in a small pond** | This term refers to an important or highly-ranked person in a small group or organisation. *He could get a job with a big company but he enjoys being a big fish in a small pond.* |
| **bring to heel** | If you force someone to behave in a disciplined manner, you *bring them to heel.* *The boy had always behaved badly, but the new headmaster managed to bring him to heel.* |
| **bulldoze into doing** | A person who is *bulldozed into doing something* is forced to do it, especially by being bullied or intimidated. *The immigrants we bulldozed into accepting the work.* |
| **call the shots/the tune** | The person who *calls the shots*or*the tune* is the one who makes all the important decisions and is in control of the situation. *He shows a lot of authority but in fact it's his wife who calls the tune.* |
| **carry weight** | If a person or organisation*carries weight,* they are influential or important. *I'm glad she's on our side - her opinion carries a lot of weight.* |
| **too many *chiefs,* not enough Indians** | This expression refers to a situation where there are too many people giving instructions and not enough people doing the work. *The business wasn't successful.  There were too many chiefs and not enough Indians.* |
| **corridors of power** | This term refers to the higher levels of government or administration where important decisions are made. *The matter is the subject of much discussion in the corridors of power at the present time.* |
| **crack the whip** | If you *crack the whip*, you use your authority to make someone obey you or work more efficiently, usually by threatening them. *Every so often I'll crack the whip to make sure we meet the deadline.* |
| **dance to someone's tune** | If you *dance to someone's tune*, you do whatever that person tells you to do. *He is the company's major shareholder so the management has to dance to his tune.* |
| **draw a line in the sand** | If you *draw a line in the sand*, you establish a limit beyond which a certain situation or activity will not be accepted. *That's it!  We're going to draw a line in the sand and make this our final proposal.* |
| **force someone's hand** | If you*force someone's hand,* you make them do something unwillingly or sooner than planned. *The interviewer forced Brad's hand and made him reveal his relocation plans.* |
| **friends in high places** | If you know important or influential people in business or government, you have*friends in high places*. *He wouldn't have succeeded without help from friends in high places.* |
| **get/have by the short hairs  (or:by the short and curlies)** | If  you *get or have someone by the short hairs,* you put them in a difficult situation from which they cannot escape, so you have complete control over them. *They are in no position to refuse; we've got them by the short hairs!* |
| **with a heavy hand** | Dealing with or treating people with a *heavy hand* means acting with discipline and severity, with little or no sensitivity. *He ran the juvenile delinquent centre with a heavy hand.* |

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| **hold the reins** | The person who*holds the reins* is someone who is in complete control of a company, firm or organisation. *He's been holding the reins for over 20 years and intends to continue for as long as possible.* |
| **iron fist/hand in a velvet glove** | This expression is used to describe someone who, behind an appearance of gentleness, is inflexible and determined. *To impose the necessary reforms, the leader used persuasion followed by force - an iron fist in a velvet glove.* |
| **knock (some) sense into** | When you *knock sense into somebody*, you use strong words or methods in order to get that person to stop behaving stupidly. *When Jason announced that he was going to drop out of college, his uncle managed to knock some sense into him.* |
| **lay down the law** | Someone who*lays down the law* tells people very forcefully and firmly what to do. *The volunteers helped in a disorganised way.  They needed someone to lay down the law.* |
| **might is right** | This saying expresses the belief that being the most powerful person or country gives you the right to do whatever you want. *There are many leaders today who believe that might is right.* |
| **my way or the highway** | If you say to someone*'it's my way or the highway',*you are telling them that either they accept to do as you say or they leave the project. *You don't have much choice when someone says: 'it's my way or the highway.'!* |
| **paper tiger** | This term refers to a person, organisation or country that is less powerful or threatening than they appear to be. *He threatens to take strong action but he's just another paper tiger.* |
| **pester power** | This term refers to the power children exert over their parents by continually nagging or pestering them until they accept to buy advertised toys or fashionable products. *Pester power leads busy parents to buy more and more for their children.* |
| **power behind the throne** | Someone with no apparent authority who has great influence over the person officially in charge is said to be *the* *power behind the throne.* *It's essential to be on good terms with his wife.  Apparently she's the power behind the throne.* |
| **pull strings** | If someone*pulls strings,* they use influential friends in order to obtain an advantage. *David found a job easily - his father just pulled a few strings!* |
| **put one's foot down** | To *put one's foot down*means to exert authority to prevent something from happening. *The child wanted to sleep on the sofa but his father put his foot down and sent him to bed.* |
| **put someone in their place** | If someone causes offence or irritation by speaking or behaving in an inappropriate manner, you*put them in their place* by letting them know that they are not as important as they seem to believe. *The new trainee is not in a position to criticise our methods.  He needs to be put in his place!* |
| **put the squeeze on** | If you *put the squeeze on*someone, you put pressure on them to force them to do something. *Bob was reluctant to work with Ben until the boss put the squeeze on him.* |

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| **read the riot act** | If you declare with force and authority that something must stop, and announce the consequences if it happens again, you*read the riot act. Dad read us the riot act when we messed up his tool-shed.* |
| **rule the roost** | If you*rule the roost,* you are the most important and powerful person in a group or community. *Officially David runs the company, but it's his father who rules the roost.* |
| **seal of approval** | If a project or contact receives a *seal of approval,* it receives formal support or approval from higher authorities. *We can't conclude the deal without the director's seal of approval.* |
| **speak softly and carry a big stick** | If you *speak softly and carry a big stick,* you express your views in a quite non-aggressive manner, but you make it clear that you are in a position to use force if necessary. *As a leader he recommends the 'speak softly and carry a big stick' method.* |
| **tail wagging the dog** | This expression refers to a situation where there is a reversal of roles, with the small or minor element having a controlling influence on the most important element. *If you let your children decide on everything, it will be a case of the tail wagging the dog!* |
| **take it upon yourself** | If you*take something upon yourself,* you do it without asking for permission or agreement. *My colleague took it upon herself to redecorate the office during my absence.* |
| **top dog** | To say that a person, group or country is*top dog*means that they are better or more powerful than others. *She's top dog in cosmetics today.* |
| **under your thumb** | If someone is *under your thumb,*they are completely under your control or influence. *Nobody ever protests.  He has the whole group under his thumb.* |
| **upper hand** | If a person or organisation*gains* or *gets the upper hand*, especially in a fight or competition, they take control over something. *We increased our market share and gained the upper hand over our competitors.* |
| **wear the trousers** | The partner in a couple who*wears the trouser*s is the one who makes all the important decisions. *The salesman hesitated before the couple. It was difficult to see who wore the trousers.* |

*English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions*

***Arguments - Disagreements - Disputes***

(Idioms, page 1 :  much ado about nothing  → call someone's bluff)

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| **much ado about nothing** | If people make *much ado about nothing*, they make a lot of fuss about something which is not important. *A discussion took place about the colour of the receptionist's shoes - much ado about nothing!* |
| **argue the toss** | If you *argue the toss*, you dispute a decision or choice which has already been made. *The final choice was made yesterday, so don't argue the toss now!* |
| **all hell broke loose** | If you say that*all hell broke loose*, you mean that there was a sudden angry or noisy reaction to something. *All hell broke loose when it was announced that the plant was going to close down.* |
| **get off by back!** | If you tell someone to *get off  your back*, you are annoyed and ask them to stop finding faults or criticizing you. *Liz, please, get off my back! You've been making comments about my work all morning!* |
| **battle lines are drawn** | This expression is used to say that opposing groups are ready to defend the reason behind the conflict. *The battle lines have been drawn between those who accept the changes and those who are against the proposed reforms.* |
| **battle of wills** | A conflict, argument or struggle where both sides are determined to win is described as a *battle of wills.* *When they separated, neither party would make concessions - it was a battle of wills.* |
| **blamestorming** | A discussion among a group of people who try to determine who or what is to blame for a particular mistake, failure or wrongdoing, is called *'blamestorming*'. *A blamestorming session took place following the unfavourable reviews in the press.* |
| **bone of contention** | A*bone of contention* is a matter or subject about which there is a lot of disagreement. *The salaries have been agreed on, but opening on Sundays is still a bone of contention.* |
| **bone to pick** | If you have a *bone to pick*with someone, you are annoyed with them and want to talk to them about it. *Mark wants to see the boss.  He says he's got a bone to pick with him.* |
| **in good/bad books** | If you are*in somebody's good or bad books*, you have their approval or disapproval. *I'm in my wife's bad books at the moment because I forgot our wedding anniversary.* |
| **bury the hatchet** | When people who have had a disagreement decide to forget their quarrel and become friends again, they*bury the hatchet*. *I didn't agree with my colleague's decision, but for the sake of peace, I decided to bury the hatchet.* |
| **call someone's bluff** | If you *call someone's bluff*, you challenge them to do what they threaten to do (while believing that they will not dare to do it). *After the neighbour's threats to demolish the fence, when Jack decided to call his bluff, there were no more complaints.* |

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| **cat and dog life** | A life in which partners are constantly or frequently quarrelling is called a*cat-and-dog life.* *They lead a cat-and-dog life.  I don't know why they stay together.* |
| **caught in the crossfire** | If you are *caught in the crossfire*, you suffer the effects of an argument or dispute between two people or groups. *When the two taxi drivers started to argue, their passengers were caught in the crossfire.* |
| **clear the air** | If you decide to *clear the air*, you try to remove the causes of fear, worry or suspicion by talking about the problem openly. *The atmosphere had become so unpleasant that he decided it was time to clear the air.* |
| **dead set against** | If you are *dead set against* something, you are strongly opposed to it. *My father wanted a dog, but my mother was dead set against the idea.* |
| **devil's advocate** | During a discussion or debate, if you play *devil's advocate*, you pretend to be against an idea or plan in order to determine the validity of the arguments in favour of it. *She decided to play devil's advocate just to see how strongly people felt about the project.* |
| **fight like cat and dog** | Two people who fight or argue*like cat and dog* frequently have violent arguments, even though they are fond of each other. *They fight like cat and dog but they're still together after 30 years.* |
| **go against the tide/stream** | If you *go against the tide*(or the *stream*), you refuse to conform to current trends, or the opinions or behaviour of other people. *Bill can be difficult to work with; he constantly goes against the tide.* |
| **hammer and tongs** | If people are *going at it hammer and tongs*, they are arguing fiercely, with a lot of energy and noise. *Our neighbours are going at it hammer and tongs again. They're constantly arguing.* |
| **let bygones be bygones** | If you*let bygones be bygones,* you decide to forget about past disagreements. *When Charlie's son was born, he decided to let bygones be bygones and contacted his parents.* |
| **let sleeping dogs lie** | If you tell someone to *let sleeping dogs lie*, you are asking them not to interfere with a situation because they could cause problems. *Look, they've settled their differences.  It's time to let sleeping dogs lie.* |
| **at loggerheads** | If you are*at loggerheads* with a person or organisation, you disagree very strongly with them. *The management and the trade unions are at loggerheads over the decision to close down the plant.* |
| **lock horns** | If you*lock horns* with somebody, you argue or fight with them about something. *If there is another incident like that in the building, the occupants will be locking horns!* |
| **no love lost** | To say that there is n*o love lost* between two people or organisations means that they do not like each other at all. *There is no love lost between the Conservatives and Democrats.* |
| **make a mountain out of a molehill** | If someone *makes a mountain out of a molehill,* they make a small, unimportant problem seem much more serious than it is. *Stop making mountains out of molehills!  It's not a major problem.* |

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| **a moot point** | A subject which gives rise to argument or debate is called a*moot point.* *Whether Bach composed it himself or not is a moot point among musicians.* |
| **nothing doing!** | This term means that there is no way you would accept to do what is proposed. *Work on Sunday?  Nothing doing!* |
| **at odds** | If one person is*at odds* with another, they disagree with each other. *Sam is at odds with his father over the purchase of a new tractor.* |
| **olive branch** | If a person or organisation holds out *an olive branch* to another, they show that they want to end a disagreement and make peace. *The protesters finally accepted the olive branch extended to them.* |
| **out of the question** | Something which is*out of the question* is impossible and is therefore not worth discussing. *Buying a new car is out of the question - we simply can't afford it.* |
| **over my dead body!** | This expression is used by someone who absolutely refuses to allow someone to do something. *"Mum, can I get by nose pierced?"  "Over my dead body!"* |
| **pick a fight** | Someone who*picks a fight*deliberately looks for an opportunity to start a quarrel or begin an argument. *Our new neighbour seizes every occasion to pick a fight.* |
| **pick holes** | If someone *picks holes* in something such as a plan, an idea or a proposal, they criticize it or try to find fault with it. *Why don't you make a suggestion instead of picking holes in all my ideas!* |
| **press something home** | If you *press something home*, you insist on a point in a discussion or argument. *Her lawyer kept pressing home the fact that she was a single mother.* |
| **running battle** | If two people or groups have *a running battle* with each other, they argue or disagree about something over a long period of time. *There's been a running battle between the local authorities and the population over the school bus route.* |
| **send someone packing** | If you*send someone packing,*you tell them to leave, in a very forceful and unfriendly way. *When Amanda discovered that Jack was unfaithful, she sent him packing.* |
| **shouting match** | An argument or debate where people shout loudly at each other is called*a shouting match.* *The debate between the two politicians turned into a shouting match which spoiled the event for viewers.* |
| **sink one's differences** | If people or organisations*sink their differences,* they decide to forget their disagreements. *We must sink our differences and build a peaceful community.* |
| **sit on the fence** | If you*sit on the fence,*you avoid taking sides in a discussion or argument. *It's an important issue.  You can't continue to sit on the fence!* |
| **skating in thin ice** | If you are*skating on thin ice,* you are doing or saying something that could cause disagreement or trouble. *Don't mention that subject during the negotiations or you could be skating on thin ice.* |
| **split hairs** | If you*split hairs*, you pay too much attention to differences that are very small or unimportant. *If we start splitting hairs, we'll never reach an agreement.* |
| **water under the bridge** | If something difficult or unpleasant took place in the past but is no longer important, it is referred to as *water under the bridge.* *They had a serious disagreement in the past, but that's water under the bridge today.* |
| **wipe the slate clean** | If you *wipe the slate clean,* you make a fresh start and forget all past offences, disagreements or mistakes. *When their father died, Bob and his brother decided to wipe the slate clean and forget the old family quarrels.* |

*English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions*

***Anxiety - Fear***

(Idioms, page 1 :   afraid of one's own shadow   →  ignorance is bliss)

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| **afraid of one's own shadow** | A person who is *afraid of his/her own shadow* is very nervous or easily frightened. *I've never seen anyone so easily scared. She's afraid of her own shadow!* |
| **bated breath** | If you wait for something with bated breath, you are both anxious and excited about an imminent event. *We waited with bated breath for the winner to be announced.* |
| **make your *blood* run cold** | If something *makes your blood run cold,* it shocks or scares you a lot. *The look in the prisoner's eye made my blood run cold!* |
| **break out in a cold sweat** | If you *break out in a cold sweat*, you begin to perspire a lot, usually from anxiety. *I get nervous at the dentist's and usually break out in a cold sweat*. |
| **bundle of nerves** | If you describe someone as a *bundle of nerve*s, you mean that they are very nervous, tense or worried. *My son is doing his driving test today.  Needless to say he's a bundle of nerves!* |
| **butterflies in stomach** | If you have *butterflies in your stomach*, you are feeling very nervous. *At the beginning of an exam, I always have butterflies in my stomach.* |
| **can't stand the pace** | If you *can't stand the pace*, you are unable to do things well when there is a lot of pressure. *She once worked for a famous fashion designer but she couldn't stand the pace.* |
| **cat on hot bricks** | A person who is*like a cat on hot bricks* is very nervous or restless. *The week before the results were published, she was like a cat on hot bricks.* |
| **on the *edge* of one's seat** | Someone who is *on the edge of their seat*is very interested in something and fits it both extremely exciting and nerve-wracking. *Look at Bob! He's on the edge of his seat watching that rugby match!* |
| **get*fingers* burnt** | If someone *gets their fingers burnt,* they suffer as a result of an unsuccessful action and are nervous about trying again. *He got his fingers burnt so badly in the last elections that he decided to withdraw from politics.* |
| **heart in one's mouth** | A person who has their *heart in their mouth* feels extremely anxious or nervous faced with a dangerous or unpleasant situation. *Emma had her heart in her mouth when she saw her two-year-old son standing in front of the open window.* |
| **heart misses a beat** | If your*heart misses (*or*skips) a beat*, you have sudden feeling of fear or excitement. *When the lights suddenly went out, my heart missed a beat.* |
| **heebie-jeebies** | A state of apprehension, nervousness or anxiety is called the *heebie-jeebies. Having to go down to the car park at night gives me the heebie-jeebies.* |
| **hold your breath** | If someone is *holding their breath,* they are waiting anxiously or excitedly for something to happen or be announced. *I went for a second interview today - now I'm holding my breath!* |
| **if you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen** | This expression means that if you feel that there is too much pressure, you can leave. *Amid the growing tension, the organiser declared : "If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen!"* |
| **ignorance is bliss** | This means that if you don't know about a problem or unpleasant fact, you won't worry about it. *I didn't know our neighbour was an escaped prisoner until the police arrived - ignorance is bliss!* |

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| **get/have the*jitters*** | If you *get (*or *have) the jitters,* especially before an important event, you become very nervous or anxious and begin to shake. *Some people get the jitters when they have to make a speech.* |
| **have kittens** | To say that you're going to*have kittens* is a dramatic way of expressing worry, anxiety or fear. *His mother nearly had kittens when Alex announced that we wanted to be a trapeze artist.* |
| **jump out of your skin** | If you*jump out of your skin*, you are extremely surprised or shocked. *Jane nearly jumped out of her skin when the horse put its head through the kitchen window!* |
| **get your knickers in a twist** | If you *get your knickers in a twist,* you are anxious, nervous, or angry faced with a difficult situation. *Don't get  your knickers in a twist!  Everything is under control.* |
| **nerves of steel** | Someone who has *nerves of steel* is not afraid in difficult or dangerous situations. *Fire-fighters need to have nerves of steel.* |
| **on pins and needles** | If you are **on** *pins and needles*, you are very anxious or nervous about what is going to happen. *Scott was on pins and needles while he waited for the result of the exam.* |
| **quaking in one's boots** | When someone is extremely scared, it is said that they are *quaking in their boots.* *When he saw the crocodiles in the water, he started quaking in his boots.* |
| **scare out of one's wits** | If something*scares you out of your wits,*it makes you very frightened or worried. *The feeling that a house is haunted can scare people out of their wits.* |
| **scare daylights out of** | If something*scares the (living) daylights* out of you, it terrifies you. *The sudden screaming scared the daylights out of me.* |
| **scared stiff** | Someone who is*scared stiff*is so frightened that they are unable to move. *My mother is scared stiff of heights.* |
| **shake like a leaf** | If you *shake like a leaf,* you tremble with fear or nervousness. *At the beginning of the interview the candidate was shaking like a leaf.* |
| **struck dumb** | If someone is *struck dumb,* they are unable to speak because they are so surprised, shocked or frightened by something. *The accused was struck dumb when the verdict was announced*. |
| **on tenterhooks** | A person who is*on tenterhooks* is in a state of anxious suspense or excitement. *The candidates were kept on tenterhooks for hours while the panel deliberated.* |
| **tongue-tied** | If you are*tongue-tied,*you have difficulty in expressing yourself because you are nervous or embarrassed. *At the start of the interview I was completely tongue-tied!* |
| **whistle in the dark** | If you *whistle in the dark,* you try to hide your fear and pretend to be brave in a scary or dangerous situation. *Bob looks confident but he's just whistling in the dark; he knows he's going to lose his job.* |
| **at your wit's end** | If you are *at your wits' end,*you are very worried about something and do not know what to do. *When her son dropped out of school, Susan was at her wit's end.* |

*English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions*

***Animals - Birds - Fish - Insects***

(idioms, page 1 :  ants in one's pants  →  red flag to a bull)

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| ***ants* in one's pants** | People who have*ants in their pants* are very restless or excited about something.  *I wish he'd relax. He's got ants in his pants about something today.* |
| **make an *ass* of yourself** | If you behave so stupidly that you appear ridiculous, you *make an ass of yourself.*  *Tom made an ass of himself by singing a love song outside Laura's door!* |
| ***bat* out of hell** | If something moves *like a bat out of hell,* it moves very quickly. *He grabbed the envelope and ran like a bat out of hell.* |
| ***bats* in the belfry** | If you say that somebody has *bats in the belfry*, you mean that  they are eccentric or crazy. *He comes up with the craziest ideas - he's got bats in the belfry!* |
| ***bear* with a sore head** | If someone is behaving like a *bear with a sore head*, they are very irritable and bad-tempered. *When his team lost the match, Brad was like a bear with a sore head.* |
| **break the back of the *beast*** | If someone*breaks the back of the beast*, they succeed in overcoming a major difficulty. *After hours of effort, the technicians finally broke the back of the beast and turned the electricity back on again.* |
| **eager *beaver*** | The term*eager beaver* refers to a person who is hardworking and enthusiastic, sometimes considered overzealous. *The new accountant works all the time -  first to arrive and last to leave. He's a real eager beaver!* |
| ***bee* in one's bonnet** | Someone who has a *bee in their bonnet* has an idea which constantly occupies their thoughts. *She's got a bee in her bonnet about moving to New York.* |
| ***bee's* knees** | To say that someone/something is the**bee's knees** means that you think they are exceptionally good. *If you say "Chloe thinks she's the bee's knees" you mean that  Chloe has a high opinion of herself.* |
| ***birds* of a feather flock together** | If two people are *birds of a feather,* they are very similar in many ways, so they naturally spend time together. *No wonder they get on well.  They're birds of a feather!* |
| **for the*birds*** | If you think something is*for the birds*, you consider it to be uninteresting, useless or not to be taken seriously. *As far as I'm concerned, his theory is for the birds.* |
| **kill two *birds* with one stone** | If you*kill two birds with one stone*, you succeed in doing two things at the same time. *By studying on the train on the way home, Claire kills two birds with one stone.* |
| **bitten by the *bug*** | If you develop a sudden interest or enthusiasm for something, you are *bitten by the bug.* *My dad decided to take up golf and was immediately bitten by the bug.* |
| **snug as a*bug*in a rug** | This is a humorous way of saying that you are warm and comfortable. *Wrapped up in a blanket on the sofa, Sophie looked as snug as a bug in a rug.* |
| **red flag to a *bull*** | To say that a statement or action is like a *red flag to a bull* means that it is sure to make someone very angry or upset. *Don't mention Tom's promotion to Mike.  It would be like a red flag to a bull!* |

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| **take *bull*by the horns** | To take*the bull by the horns* means that a person decides to act decisively in order to deal with a difficult situation or problem. *When the argument turned into a fight, the bar owner took the bull by the horns and called the police.* |
| **face like a*bulldog*chewing a wasp** | To say that someone has a*face like a bulldog chewing a wasp*means that you find them very unattractive because they have a screwed-up ugly expression on their face. *Not only was he rude but he had a face like a bulldog chewing a wasp!* |
| **social *butterfly*** | A person who has a lot of friends and acquaintances and likes to flit from one social event to another is called a *social butterfly.* *Jessica is constantly out and about;  she's a real social butterfly.* |
| **a*cat* in gloves catches no mice** | This expression means that if you are too careful and polite, you may not obtain what you want. *Negotiate carefully, but remember : a cat in gloves catches no mice!* |
| **a *cat* can look at a king** | This expression means that nobody is so important that an ordinary person cannot look at or be curious about them. |
| **a fat *cat*** | Term used to refer to a rich, powerful, self-satisfied person who uses their money and power in a way that you disapprove of.  *The place was full of fat cats on their big yachts.* |
| **grin like a Cheshire cat** | When someone has a smile on their face because they are happy or satisfied about something, they*grin like a Cheshire cat. I knew she had succeeded when I saw her with a grin like a Cheshire cat.* |
| **like herding cats** | This expression refers to the difficulty of coordinating a situation which involves people who all want to act independently. *Organizing an outing for a group of people from different countries is like herding cats!* |
| **let the cat out of the bag** | If you*let the cat out of the bag*, you reveal a secret, often unintentionally. *When the child told her grandmother about the plans for her birthday, she let the cat out of the bag.  It was supposed to be a secret!* |
| **like a cat on hot bricks** | A person who is*like a cat on hot bricks* is very nervous or restless. *The week before the results were published, she was like a cat on hot bricks.* |
| **like a scalded cat** | If something or something moves*like a scalded cat*, they move very fast, usually because they are frightened or shocked. *As soon as he saw the policeman, he ran off like a scalded cat.* |
| **like a cat that ate the canary** | If, after an achievement or success, a person appears very self-satisfied or pleased with themselves, you can say that they look *like the cat that ate the canary.* *When the boss complimented him on his work, Steve looked like the cat that ate the canary.* |
| **like something the cat dragged in** | If you compare a person or thing to*something the cat dragged in,*you think they they look dirty, untidy or generally unappealing. *My teenage son often looks like something the cat dragged in.* |
| **like cat and dog** | Two people who fight or argue*like cat and dog* frequently have violent arguments, even though they are fond of each other. *They fight like cat and dog but they're still together after 30 years.* |

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| **wait for the cat to jump** | If you *wait for the cat to jump*, or to *see which way the cat jumps,*you delay taking action until you see how events will turn out. *Let's wait for the cat to  jump before we decide.* |
| **cat's lick** | A *cat's lick*means a very quick wash. *A cat's lick was all he had time for before rushing off to catch the bus.* |
| **cat's whiskers (also: cat's pyjamas)** | This expression refers to someone who considers themselves to be better than others in a particular area : beauty, competence, intelligence, sport, etc. *Ever since she got a promotion, she thinks she's the cat's whiskers!* |
| **cat-and-dog life** | A life in which partners are constantly or frequently quarrelling is called a*cat-and-dog life.* *They lead a cat-and-dog life.  I don't know why they stay together.* |
| **like herding cats** | This expression refers to the difficulty of coordinating a situation which involves people who all want to act independently. *Organizing an outing for a group of people from different countries is like herding cats!* |
| **raining cats and dogs** | If it's*raining cats and dogs*, it is raining very heavily. *We'll have to cancel the picnic I'm afraid - it's raining cats and dogs*. |
| **play cat and mouse** | To *play cat and mouse* with someone means to treat them alternately cruelly and kindly, so that they do not know what to expect. *He's difficult to work for, always playing cat and mouse with the employees.* |
| **chicken feed** | An amount of money considered small or unimportant is called*chicken feed.* *I got a job during the holidays but the pay was chicken feed.* |
| **chicken out of** | If you *chicken out* of something, you decide not to do something because you are afraid. *He decided to join a karate class, but chickened out  at the last minute.* |
| **like a headless chicken** | If a person rushes about *like a headless chicken*, they act in a disorderly way, without thinking or analyzing the situation carefully. *As soon as the store opened, my mother started running around like a headless chicken, eager to find bargains.* |
| **no*spring chicken*** | To say that someone is no*spring chicken* means that they are quite old or well past their youth. *How old is the owner? I don't know but she's no spring chicken!* |
| **wave a dead chicken** | When faced with a serious problem, if you take steps that you  know in advance will be futile, to show that you made an effort, you *wave a dead chicken.* *The TV set was permanently damaged, but the technician decided to wave a dead chicken to satisfy the old lady before announcing the bad news.* |
| **chickens come home to roost** | If you say that*chickens have come home to roost*, you mean that bad or embarrassing things done in the past by someone are now causing problems for that person. *As tenants the couple were noisy and disorderly.  Now they can't find a place to rent.  The chickens have come home to roost!* |
| **a cash cow** | A product or service which is a regular source of income for a company is called a*cash cow.* *His latest invention turned out to be a real cash cow.* |

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| **till the *cows* come home** | If you say *'till the cows come home'* you mean for a long time or forever. *You can ask till the cows come home but I'm not buying you a scooter!* |
| **why buy a *cow* when you can get milk for free?** | This refers to not paying for something that you can obtain for free. (Sometimes refers to a decision not to marry when you can have the benefits of marriage without any commitment.) *Rent is high so Bobby is still living with his parents.   He says : why buy a cow when you can get milk for free?* |
| **crocodile tears** | To shed*crocodile tears* means to shed false tears or show insincere grief. *Caroline pretended to be sad but we all knew her tears were crocodile tears.* |
| **eat *crow*** | If you*eat crow*, you admit that you were wrong about something and apologize. *He had no option but to eat crow and admit that his analysis was wrong.* |
| **as the *crow* flies** | This expression refers to distance measured in a straight line. *It's two miles from here to the station as the crow flies, but of course it's much further by road.* |
| **like a *deer*/rabbit caught in the headlights** | When you are so surprised that you are momentarily confused or unable to react quickly, you are *like a deer (or a rabbit) caught in the headlights.* *Surprised by the journalist's question, he was like a deer caught in the headlights*. |
| **dead as a *dodo*** | To say that something is (as) *dead as a dodo* means that it is unquestionably dead or obsolete, or has gone out of fashion. ***(A dodo is a bird that is now extinct.)*** *The floppy disk is an invention that is now (as) dead as a dodo.* |
| **dog's breakfast** | To describe something as a*dog's breakfast* means that it is a complete mess. *The new secretary made a dog's breakfast out of the filing system.* |
| **dog's life** | People use this expression when complaining about a situation or job which they find unpleasant or unsatisfactory. *It's a dog's life working in the after-sales department.* |
| **dog eat dog** | This expression refers to intense competition and rivalry in pursuit of one's own interests, with no concern for morality. *The business world is tough today. There's a general dog-eat-dog attitude.* |
| **dog in the manger** | A person referred to as a *dog in the manger* is someone who stops others from enjoying something he/she cannot use or doesn't want. *She hates the guitar so she won't allow her son to learn to play it - a real dog in the manger!* |
| **dog and pony show** | A *dog and pony show* is a marketing event or presentation which has plenty of style but not much content. |
| **crooked as a dog's hind leg** | To say that someone is *as crooked as a dog's hind leg* means that they are very dishonest indeed. *He can't be trusted - he's as crooked as a dog's hind leg.* |

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| **every *dog* has its day** | This expression means that everyone can be successful at something at some time in their life. *I didn't win this time, but I'll be lucky one day.  Every dog has its day.* |
| **give a *dog* a bad name** | People who lose their reputation have difficulty regaining it  because others continue to blame or suspect them. *Tom was suspected as usual.  Give a dog a bad name!* |
| **go to the *dogs*** | To say that a company, organisation or country is *going to the dogs* means that it is becoming less successful or efficient than before. *Some think the company will go to the dogs if it is nationalized.* |
| **hair of the *dog* that bit you** | Using as a remedy a small amount of what made you ill, for example a drop of alcohol when recovering from drinking too much, is called *'a hair of the dog that bit you'*. *Here, have a drop of this.  It's a hair of the dog that bit you!* |
| **help a lame *dog* over stile** | If you *help a lame dog over a stile,* you help someone who is in difficulty or trouble. *You can trust him - he's always ready to help a lame dog over a stile.* |
| **let sleeping *dogs* lie** | If you tell someone to*let sleeping dogs lie*, you are asking them not to interfere with a situation because they could  cause problems. *Look, they've settled their differences.  It's time to let sleeping dogs lie.* |
| **like a *dog* with two tails** | If someone is*like a dog with two tails*, they are extremely happy. *When Paul won the first prize he was like a dog with two tails.* |
| **quick as a *dog* can lick a dish** | If you do something surprisingly fast, you do it *as quick as a dog can lick a dish.* *He packed his bag as quick as a dog can lick a dish.* |
| **tail wagging the *dog*** | This expression refers to a situation where there is a reversal of roles, with the small or minor element having a controlling influence on the most important element. *If you let your children decide on everything, it will be a case of the tail wagging the dog!* |
| **old *dog* for a hard road** | This expression means that experience is invaluable when one is faced with a difficult task. *The case calls for an experienced lawyer, an old dog for a hard road.* |
| **small *dog*, tall weeds** | This expression is used to refer to someone who does not have the ability or the resources necessary to perform a task. *It may be too difficult for the trainee - small dog, tall weeds!* |
| **(can't) teach a *dog* old tricks** | This expression means that someone who is used to doing things in a certain way will find it difficult to change their habits. *Your grandfather will never use a smart phone.  You can't teach an old dog new tricks!* |
| **top *dog*** | To say that a person, group or country is*top dog*means that they are better or more powerful than others. *She's top dog in cosmetics today.* |
| **why keep a *dog* and bark yourself?** | This expression means that if someone or something can do a task for you, there's no reason to do it yourself. *My grandmother has an electric mixer but she continues to make her cakes by hand. Why keep a dog and bark yourself?* |
| **love me, love my *dog*** | This expression means that if someone loves you, they must love everything about you, including everyone and everything that you love. *I'm not going to change anything in my life.  Love me, love my dog!* |

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| **my dogs are barking** | When a person says that their *dogs are barking* they mean that their feet are hurting. *I've been shopping all day. My dogs are barking!* |
| **doggie bag** | A bag provided by a restaurant so that you can take home the leftover food is called a *doggie (or doggy) bag.* *The portions were so big that I decided to ask for a doggie bag.* |
| **donkey work** | This expression is used to describe the unpleasant, repetitive or boring parts of a job. I*do the donkey work - my boss gets the credit!* |
| **donkey's years** | If someone has been doing something for *donkey's years*, they have been doing it for a very long time. *He knows the town inside out.  He's been living here for donkey's  years.* |
| **talk the hind leg off a *donkey*** | This expression is used to describe a very talkative person. *It's difficult to end a conversation with Betty.  She could talk the hind leg off a donkey!* |
| **dead *duck*** | This expression refers to a project or scheme which has been abandoned or is certain to fail. *The new cinema is going to be a dead duck because it's too far away from the town centre.* |
| **lame *duck*** | A person or organisation in difficulty and unable to manage without help is called *a lame duck.* *Some banks have become lame ducks recently.* |
| **sitting *duck*** | A *sitting duck* is an easy target, a person who is easy to deceive. *The young girl was a sitting duck for the photographer.* |
| **get your *ducks* in a row** | If you *get your ducks in a row,* you get things well organised. *We need to get our ducks in a row if we want our project to succeed.* |
| **like water off a *duck's* back** | Criticism or comments which have no effect on someone is referred to as being *''like water off a duck's back*'. *He's been warned of the dangers of smoking but it's like water off a duck's back.* |
| **take to something like a *duck* to water** | If you*take to something like a duck to water,* you do it naturally and easily, without fear or hesitation. *When Sophie first tried skiing, she took to it like a duck to water.* |
| **eagle eyes** | Someone who has*eagle eyes* see or notices things more easily than others. *Tony will help us find it - he's got eagle eyes* |
| **elephant in the room** | A problem that no one wants to discuss, but is so obvious that it cannot be ignored, is called *an elephant in the room*. *Let's face it, his work is unsatisfactory. It's an elephant in the room that we need to discuss.* |
| **fish in troubled waters** | If you*fish in troubled waters*, you try to gain advantages for yourself from a disturbed state of affairs. *Between the declaration of independence and the first elections, some people were accused of fishing in troubled waters.* |
| **fish out of water** | If you feel*like a fish out of water*, you feel uncomfortable in unfamiliar surroundings. *As a non-golfer, I felt like a fish out of water at the clubhouse.* |

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| **big*fish* in a small pond** | This term refers to an important or highly-ranked person in a small group or organisation. *He could get a job with a big company but he enjoys being a big fish in a small pond.* |
| **different kettle of *fish*** | To describe a person, thing or situation as a*different kettle of fish*means that it is completely different from what was previously mentioned. *You may have good business relations, but living in that country is a different kettle of fish.* |
| **drink like a*fish*** | A person who *drinks like a fish* is one who drinks a lot. *I'm nervous if Ben drives when we go out  because he drinks like a fish!* |
| **neither *fish* nor fowl** | This expression is used to describe people or things that are difficult to classify, that are neither one thing nor another. *Medical interns are neither fish nor fowl.  They are neither students nor fully qualified practitioners.* |
| **other *fish* to fry** | A person who has *other fish to fry*has more important things to do. *I don't think he'll attend the office party; he's got other fish to fry.* |
| **other *fish* in the sea** | To say that there are *other fish in the sea* means that there are many people just as good as the person mentioned. *The candidate we selected refused the job?  Never mind - there are (plenty of) other fish in the sea!* |
| **sounds/smells *fishy*** | If something *sounds or smells fishy*, you are suspicious about it. *Do you believe what she said? Her story sounds fishy to me* |
| **happy as a *flea* in a doghouse** | If someone is (as)*happy as a flea in a doghouse*, they are very happy and contented. *Since she moved to a smaller apartment, my mother is as happy as a flea in a doghouse!* |
| **flea in one's ear** | After an attempt at something, if you are sent away with *a flea in your ear*, you are angrily reprimanded or humiliated. *When Andy tried to put the blame on Pete, he was sent away with a flea in his ear.* |
| **fly in the ointment** | A*fly in the ointment*refers to something that prevents a situation from being completely satisfactory. *Tony's poor English was a fly in the ointment when he applied for the job.* |
| **fly on the wall** | A person who watches a situation without being noticed is called a *fly on the wall.* *I'd like to be a fly on the wall when the management discusses my project.* |
| **bar *fly*** | A *bar fly* is someone who spends a lot of time drinking in bars and pubs. *You'll find Johnny down at the pub - he's a real bar fly.* |
| **(as) sly as a *fox*** | Someone who is*as sly as a fox* is cunning and clever at getting what they want, especially by deceiving or tricking people. *Be wary of that insurance salesman.  He's as sly as a fox.* |
| **eat the *frog*/eat that*frog*!** | This expression is used to encourage someone do the most difficult or most unpleasant task of the day first, before anything else, rather than avoiding or postponing it. In that way nothing worse can happen all day.  Original expression: *“If you have to eat a frog, don’t look at it for too long.”* |
| **frog in one's throat** | A person who has*a frog in their throat*has difficulty in speaking clearly because they have a cough or a sore throat. *Teaching was difficult today.  I had a frog in my throat all morning.* |
| **juggle *frogs*** | A person who is*juggling frogs* is trying to deal with many different tasks at the tame time and finding the situation difficult. *I've got so many things to do at the moment, I feel like I'm juggling frogs!* |
| **take/have a gander** | If you*take* or *have a gander* at something, generally new or unusual, you have a look at it or go to check it out. *Let's take a gander at the new shopping centre.  Sally says it's fantastic!* |

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| **all his*geese* are swans** | This expression refers to someone who constantly exaggerates the importance or the qualities of somebody or something. *Don't let him impress you. He always exaggerates. All his geese are swans.* |
| **get somebody's *goat*** | Something that *gets someone's goat* annoys or irritates them. *People who keep pushing when you're standing in line really get my goat!* |
| **cook someone's *goose*** | To *cook somebody's goose* means to spoil that person's chances of success. *When the burglar saw the police car arriving, he realized his goose was cooked!* |
| **have *goose* pimples** | If you have *goose pimples*, you are cold or so afraid that your skin is temporarily raised into little lumps. *I was so scared that I had goose pimples all through the film!* |
| **sauce for the *goose*** | The saying *'what's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander'* means that what is appropriate for one person should also be appropriate for the other person concerned. *Women should earn the salary as men for the same job. What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander!* |
| **wild *goose* chase** | If someone is sent on a*wild goose chase*, they waste their time looking for something that there is little chance of finding. *They tried to find out who sent the anonymous complaint, but it turned out to be a wild goose chase.* |
| **knee-high to a *grasshopper*** | This term refers to a very young and therefore small child. *Look how tall you are! Last time I saw you, you were knee-high to a grasshopper!* |
| **guinea pig** | People who are used as *guinea pigs* are people on whom new methods, treatment or ideas are tested. |
| **run with the *hare* and hunt with the hounds** | If you*run with the hare and hunt with the hounds,* you want to stay on friendly terms with both sides in a quarrel. *Bob always wants to keep everyone happy, but he can't run with the hare and  hunt with the hounds this time - the issue is too importan*t. |
| **eyes like a *hawk*** | If you've got eyes like a hawk, you have good eyesight and notice every detail. *Of course Dad will notice the scratch on his car - he's got eyes like a hawk.* |
| **go the whole *hog*** | When you *go the whole hog*, you do something thoroughly or completely. *They put up a few decorations for Christmas, then they decided to go the whole hog and buy a tree and all the trimmings.* |
| **live high off the *hog*** | Someone who *lives high off the hog* has a lot of money and a very comfortable lifestyle. *Now he's wealthy and living high off the hog.* |
| **hornet's nest** | If you*stir up a hornet's nest,* you do something which causes a commotion and provokes criticism and anger. *His letter to the Board stirred up a real hornet's nest.* |
| **horse of a different colour** | To describe a person or a problem as *a horse of a different colour* means either that the person does things differently from others, or that the nature of the problem is entirely different. *I expected to negotiate with the sales manager, but the chairman turned up - now he's a horse of a different colour!* |

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| **horse sense** | Someone who has *horse sense* is a practical thinker who has the ability to make sensible decisions. *Don't worry. Andrew has good horse sense. He'll do the right thing.* |
| **back/bet on the wrong *horse*** | If you *back or bet on the wrong horse*, for example the loser in a contest, match or election, you support the wrong person. *When I voted for him I was convinced he would win, but I backed the wrong horse!* |
| **beat/flog  a dead *horse*** | To say that someone is*beating (or flogging) a dead horse*means that they are wasting time and effort trying to do or achieve something that is impossible.  *Mark is beating a dead horse trying to get his money reimbursed. The company has gone bankrupt!* |
| **dark *horse*** | A *dark horse* is secretive person who keeps hidden a surprising ability or skill. *He is such a dark horse. I never knew he was a playwright !* |
| **could eat a *horse*** | To say that you *could eat a horse* means that you are very hungry. *Let's get something to eat.  I'm starving. I could eat a horse!* |
| **dark *horse*** | A *dark horse* is secretive person who keeps hidden a surprising ability or skill. *He is such a dark horse. I never knew he was a playwright !* |
| **get on your high *horse*** | If you *get on your high horse,* you start behaving in a haughty manner, as though you should be treated with more respect. *He got on his high horse when he was asked to show his membership card.* |
| **hold your *horses*** | If you tell someone to *hold their horses*, you think they are doing something too fast and should slow down and not rush into further action. *Hold your horses! We need to get the customer's approval first!.* |
| **one *horse* town** | A place referred to as a *one-horse town* is a small, boring town where nothing much ever happens. *I wish my grandparents didn't live in that one-horse town.  It's such a boring place!* |
| **horses for courses** | This expression means that because horses race better on a course that suits them, it is important to match people with suitable jobs or tasks. A person suited to one activity may not be suited to another. *His experience in sales doesn't necessarily make him ideal for the job. Horses for courses, as the saying goes!* |
| **straight from *horse's*mouth** | If you learn something *straight from the horse's mouth*, the information is given to you by someone who is directly involved. *"How do you know Sam has resigned?" "I got it straight from the horse's mouth - Sam told me himself!"* |
| **kangaroo court** | A *kangaroo court* is an illegal tribunal set up by a group of people who have taken the law into their own hands and conduct trials which deny fundamental justice. *Calm down please!  Is this a meeting or a kangaroo court?* |
| **have *kittens*** | To say that you're going to*have kittens* is a dramatic way of expressing worry, anxiety or fear. *His mother nearly had kittens when Alex announced that we wanted to be a trapeze artist.* |
| **mutton dressed as *lamb*** | This expression refers to a middle-aged woman who tries to look younger by dressing in clothes designed for younger people. *The style doesn't suit her - it has a mutton-dressed-as-lamb effect on her!* |

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| **lion's share** | The *lion's share* of something is the largest portion, or the best part. *He left very little money to his children; the lion's share was donated to charity.* |
| **beard the*lion* in his den** | If you visit someone important in the place where they work, in order to challenge him/her or obtain something, *you beard the lion in his den.* *If he continues to refuse my calls, I'll have to beard the lion in his den.* |
| **walk into the *lion's* den** | If you *walk into the lion's den,* you find yourself in a difficult situation in which you have to face unfriendly or aggressive people. *After the failure of the negotiations, he had to walk into the lion's den and face the Press.* |
| **monkey business** | An activity which is organised in a deceitful or dishonest way is called *monkey business.* *The results announced seem suspicious - I think there's some monkey business going on.* |
| **more fun than a barrel of *monkeys*** | If something is very amusing or enjoyable, you can say that it is *more fun than a barrel of monkeys.*  *The TV quiz was more fun than a barrel of monkeys!* |
| **make a *monkey* (out) of** | If you humiliate someone by making them appear ridiculous or foolish, you *make a monkey*(out) of that person. *That's enough teasing.  Don't make a monkey out of him.* |
| **like a *moth* to a flame** | To say that a person is attracted to someone or something *like a moth to a flame*means that the attraction is so strong they cannot resist. *He's drawn to the casino like a moth to a flame.* |
| **mouse potato** | This term refers to a person who spends a lot of time in front of the computer. *My son and his friends are all mouse potatoes - constantly glued to the computer!* |
| **(as) quiet as a *mouse*** | When someone is as *quiet as a mouse,* they make no noise at all. *The burglar was a quiet as a mouse as he moved around the house.* |
| **(as) stubborn as a *mule*** | If someone is *as stubborn as a mule,*they are very obstinate and unwilling to listen to reason or change their mind. *His friends advised him to accept the offer, but you know Larry - he's as stubborn as a mule!* |
| ***mutton* dressed as lamb** | This expression refers to a middle-aged woman who tries to look younger by dressing in clothes designed for younger people. *The style doesn't suit her - it has a mutton-dressed-as-lamb effect on her!* |
| **ostrich strategy/politics** | Someone who adopts an *ostrich strategy or policy*chooses to ignore or evade an obvious problem in the hope that it will resolve itself or disappear. *Adopting an ostrich strategy will only make matters worse - we've got to find a solution.* |
| **night *owl*** | Someone who is lively and active at night and goes to bed very late is called *night owl*. *I work better in the evenings than in the morning.  My friends say I'm a night owl.* |

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| **close as an *oyster*** | Someone who is *as close as an oyster* will never reveal something told in confidence or betray a secret. *Sophie will never repeat what you tell her.  She's as close as an oyster.* |
| **the world is your *oyster*** | This expression means that you are free and able to enjoy the pleasures and opportunities that life has to offer. *She left college feeling that the world was her oyster.* |
| **make a *pig* of yourself** | If you *make a pig of yourself*, you eat and drink too much. *Watch what you eat - don't make a pig of yourself!* |
| **make a *pig's* ear of** | If you *make a  pig's ear o*f something, you do a task or a chore very badly or make a complete mess of it. *Gary offered to paint the kitchen but he made a pig's ear of it.* |
| **on the *pig's* back** | A person who is*on the pig's back* is in a state of luck and everything is going well for them. *Before the recession, Ireland was on the pig's back, but the situation has changed greatly.* |
| **(put) lipstick on a *pig*** | This expression means that to 'dress up' something unappealing or ugly, in a vain attempt to make it look better, is *like putting lipstick on a pig.* *Flowers on that ugly old bridge would be (like putting) lipstick on a pig!* |
| **pigs get fat, hogs get slaughtered** | You should be satisfied when you have enough; if you are too greedy, like a hog, you risk losing everything. |
| **pigs might fly** | The expression *'pigs might fly'* expresses disbelief, or the idea that miracles might happen but are extremely unlikely. *My grandmother buying a computer? ... Yeah! ... and pigs might fly!* |
| **stool *pigeon*** | A person who acts as an informer, especially one who gives information to the police or the authorities, is called a*stool pigeon.* *I don't trust Jack. I think he's a stool pigeon for the management.* |
| **shank's *pony*** | If you go somewhere on*Shank's pony,* you have to walk rather than travel by bus, car, etc. *It was impossible to find a taxi after the party, so it was Shank's pony for us!* |
| **play*possum*** | When someone *plays possum*, they pretend to be dead or asleep in order to avoid something they don't want to do. *Sarah's not asleep.  She's just playing possum because she doesn't want to come swimming.* |
| **rats in the attic** | If you say that someone *has rats in the attic,* you mean that they are a bit mad or that their behaviour is eccentric. *She keeps repeating the same question.  I think she's got rats in the attic.* |
| **smell a*ra*t** | To say 'I*smell a rat'* means that you suspect that something is wrong, or that someone is doing something dishonest or incorrect. *The profits announced are abnormally low.  I smell a rat.* |
| **packed like *sardines*** | If a group of people are*packed like sardines*, they are pressed together tightly and uncomfortably because there is not enough space. *The bus was very crowded - we were packed like sardines!* |
| **loan *shark*** | A *loan shark* is an authorized person who lends money at extremely high interest rates to people who are unable to obtain a loan from the bank. *The young immigrant was beaten because he was late paying back money to a loan shark.* |

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| **black *sheep*** | The*black sheep* is one who behaves very differently or badly, and is considered disreputable by the other members of the family. *Joe was the black sheep of the family, always getting into trouble*. |
| ***snail*mail** | This term refers to the standard system of mail delivery, or postal service, considered very slow compared to electronic mail. *More and more people are using e-mail rather than the traditional postal service, snail mail.* |
| ***snake* in the grass** | Someone who pretends to be your friend while actually betraying you is *a snake in the grass.*  *I thought I could trust my colleague but he turned out to be a snake in the grass.* |
| **lower than a *snake's* belly** | To say that someone is *lower than a snake's belly*means that they are bad, dishonest or have very low moral standards. *Anyone who is capable of taking advantage of young vulnerable children is lower than a snake's belly.* |
| **paper *tiger*** | This term refers to a person, organisation or country that is less powerful or threatening than they appear to be. *He threatens to take strong action but he's just another paper tiger.* |
| **cold *turkey*** | This term means to immediately and completely stop an addictive substance, a regular activity or a behavioural pattern, instead of ending it gradually. *When Dave decided to stop smoking, he did it cold turkey on January 1st* |
| **(like) *turkeys*voting for Christmas** | If turkeys were allowed to vote they would never vote for Christmas because turkey is often eaten at Christmas. This expression is used to say that a particular option is unlikely to be chosen because it would be against the interests of the people concerned.  *Accepting a decrease in salary would be like turkeys voting for Christmas!* |
| **turn *turtle*** | If a boat*turns turtle,* it capsizes or turns upside down in the water. *We had fun sailing yesterday, although we nearly turned turtle a couple of times!* |
| **face like a bulldog chewing a *wasp*** | To say that someone has a*face like a bulldog chewing a wasp*means that you find them very unattractive because they have a screwed-up ugly expression on their face. *Not only was he rude but he had a face like a bulldog chewing a wasp!* |
| **whale of a time** | When people have*a whale of a time,* they enjoy themselves a lot. *We had a whale of a time at the party last night.* |
| **like kicking*whales* down the beach** | This expression is used, especially in computing, to refer to a particularly slow  and difficult process. *Getting him to adopt the new method is like kicking whales down the beach.* |
| **wolf in sheep's clothing** | To describe someone as*a wolf in sheep's clothing*means that although they look harmless, they are really very dangerous. *Be careful.  He looks kind but in fact he's a wolf in sheep's clothing.* |
| **cry *wolf*** | To *cry wolf* is to call for help when you are not really in danger.  As a result, nobody believes you when you really need help. *There's Mary screaming again!  Does she really need help or is she just crying wolf again?* |
| **keep the *wolf* from the door** | To*keep the wolf from the door* you need to have enough money to buy food and other basic essentials in order to survive. *My grandparents earned barely enough to keep the wolf from the door.* |
| ***worm* one's way out of** | If a person *worms their way out of something,* they use artful or devious means in order to avoid participating in it. *You're not going to worm your way out of this. You must do your share*! |
| **even a *worm* will turn** | This expression means that even someone who never complains will react to an intolerable situation. *Don't treat him so severely.  He never protests, but even a worm will turn!* |
| ***worm's*eye view** | To offer *a worm's eye view*of a situation is to give your opinion based on what you see at close range from an inferior position, so it is therefore not a general view. *I'm not sure I can be of much help.  I can only offer you a worm's eye view of the situation.* |

*English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions*

***Anger - Annoyance***

(idioms, page 1 :  up in arms  →  get/take flak)

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| **be up in arms** | If you are *up in arms about something, you are very angry. The population was up in arms over the demolition of the old theatre.* |
| **get off by back!** | If you tell someone to *get off your back*, you are annoyed and ask them to stop finding faults or criticizing you. *Liz, please, get off my back! You've been making comments about my work all morning!* |
| **bear with sore head** | If someone is behaving like a *bear with a sore head*, they are very irritable and bad-tempered. *When his team lost the match, Brad was like a bear with a sore head.* |
| **bite head off** | If you *bite someone's head off*, you criticize them strongly (and perhaps unfairly). *I worked 10 hours a day all week and my boss bit my head off for not doing my share of the work!* |
| **black mood** | To be*in a black mood* means to be irritable, angry or even depressed. *You'd better keep away from Bill today.  He's in a black mood.* |
| **blow a fuse** | If you *blow a fuse*, you suddenly lose y our temper and become very angry. *Charlie blew a fuse yesterday then he discovered that his ipod had been stolen.* |
| **blow a gasket** | When a furious person *blows a gasket*, they explode with anger. *When the shop was burgled for the third time, the owner blew a gasket.* |
| **blow your top** | If you *blow your top*, you suddenly become very angry. *When my mother saw the state of the house after the party, she blew her top!* |
| **have a bone to pick** | If you have a *bone to pick*with someone, you are annoyed with them and want to talk to them about it. *Mark wants to see the boss.  He says he's got a bone to pick with him.* |
| **cheesed off** | If someone is *cheesed off* with something, they are annoyed, bored or frustrated. *Jenny is absolutely cheesed off with her job.* |
| **come down like a ton of bricks** | If someone *comes down on you like a ton of bricks,* they criticize you severely because you have done something wrong. *If you mix up the order, the boss will come down on you like a ton of bricks!* |
| **for crying out loud!** | This expression is used to show irritation, exasperation or anger. *For crying out loud, turn that television off!* |
| **cut it out!** | If you say '*cut it out'* to someone, you are telling them to stop doing something. *I've had enough of your insinuations, so just cut it out!* |
| **drive up the wall** | If somebody or something *drives you up the wall,* they do something that greatly annoys or irritates you. *I can't concentrate with all the noise - it's driving me up the wall.* |
| **eat someone alive** | If you criticize someone severely because you are angry with them, you *eat them alive*. (You can also be eaten alive - bitten repeatedly -  by insects.) *The boss will eat me alive if the report arrives late.* |
| **fit to be tied** | Someone who is*fit to be tied*is extremely irritated, upset or angry. *Harry was fit to be tied when his dog dug up the flowers he had planted.* |
| **get/take flak** | If you *get*or*take flak*, you receive severe criticism for something you have done. *He got a lot of flak for the way he handled the situation.* |

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| **flea in one's ear** | After an attempt at something, if you are sent away with *a flea in your ear*, you are angrily reprimanded or humiliated. *When Andy tried to put the blame on Pete, he was sent away with a flea in his ear.* |
| **fly off the handle** | A person who*flies off the handle* becomes suddenly very angry. *Dad flew off the handle when I told him I had damaged his new car.* |
| **foam at the mouth** | Someone who*foams at the mouth*is extremely angry about something. *The director was foaming at the mouth when he saw a picture of his children in the newspaper.* |
| **get off my back!** | If you tell someone to *get off your back*, you are annoyed and ask them to stop finding faults or criticizing you. *Liz, please, get off my back! You've been making comments about my work all morning!* |
| **get somebody's goat** | Something that*get someone's goat* annoys or irritates them. *People who keep pushing when you're standing in line really gets my goat!* |
| **get your knickers in a twist** | If you *get your knickers in a twist,* you are angry, nervous or anxious faced with a difficult situation. *Don't get  your knickers in a twist! Everything is under control.* |
| **get a rise out of** | If you make someone react angrily by jokingly saying something that you know will irritate them, you *get a rise out of them*. *He gets a rise out of his daughter by asking her about her latest diet.* |
| **get in someone's hair** | If you*get in someone's hair,* you are annoying them so much that they cannot get on with what they are doing. *I'd finish the report more quickly if my colleague wasn't getting in my hair all the time!* |
| **get on someone's nerves** | If you *get on someone's nerves,* you annoy or innitate them a great deal. *The boys next door are so noisy they're getting on my nerves.* |
| **give it a rest!** | If someone tells you to *give it a rest,* they are asking you to stop doing something such as complaining or talking continuously. *All you talk about is politics - give it a rest ... please!* |
| **give a piece of one's mind** | If you tell someone exactly what you think, in a very angry manner, you *give them a piece of your mind.* *Jack was so irritated by his neighbours' behaviour that he decided to give them a piece of his mind.* |
| **give the (rough) edge of one's tongue** | If you *give the (rough) edge of your tongue*, you scold someone severely or speak to them very aggressively or rudely. *My boss was so angry that I really got the rough edge of his tongue.* |
| **give a tongue-lashing** | When you scold someone severely, you *give them a tongue-lashing. The teacher gave Jeremy a tongue-lashing when he arrived late for school for the third time.* |
| **the gloves are off!** | This expression is used when there are signs that a fight is about to start. *The two candidates are out of their seats.  The gloves are off!* |
| **go ballistic** | When someone *goes ballistic*, they become very angry. *My dad went ballistic when he saw the state of the garden after the barbecue.* |

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| **go off the deep end** | If a person *goes off the deep end*, they become so angry or upset that they cannot control their emotions. *Eva will go off the deep end if her kids leave the kitchen in a mess again.* |
| **go postal** | If someone *goes postal,* they lose their temper and express their anger in a violent way. *My parents will go postal when they see the state of the house!* |
| **go spare** | If you *go spare* you lose your temper completely. *Lea's dad would go spare if he knew how much she spent in London!* |
| **go through the roof** | If someone *goes through the roof,* they become very angry. *My father went through the roof when Paul damaged his new car.* |
| **good riddance!** | This expression is used to express relief at becoming free of an unpleasant or unwanted person or thing. *Our horrible neighbour has moved house, and all I can say is 'good riddance'!* |
| **harp on** | If you *harp on (about) something*, you tire others by talking continuously and tediously about it. *My parents are always harping on about my school results.* |
| **haul over the coals** | If you *haul someone over the coals,* you reprimand them harshly because they have done something wrong or incorrectly. *He was hauled over the coals for the poor quality of his presentation.* |
| **hot under the collar** | If you get*hot under the collar,* you feel annoyed, indignant or embarrassed. *If anyone criticizes his proposals, Joe immediately gets hot under the collar.* |
| **jump down someone's throat** | If someone *jumps down another person's throat,* they suddenly start shouting at them in a very angry manner. *When I said the instructions were not very clear, she jumped down my throat!* |
| **kick yourself** | If you feel like *kicking yourself,* you are angry with yourself for something you have or have not done. *I could have kicked myself for forgetting Emily's birthday.* |
| **like a red flag to a bull** | To say that a statement or action is like a *red flag to a bull* means that it is sure to make someone very angry or upset. *Don't mention Tom's promotion to Mike.  It would be like a red flag to a bull!* |
| **look daggers at** | Someone who*looks daggers* at another looks at them very angrily. *David looked daggers at Paul when he invited his new girlfriend to dance.* |
| **make one's hackles rise** | If someone or something*makes your hackles rise,* they make you angry. *Her constant criticism really makes my hackles rise!* |
| **make a song and dance** | If someone complains in an annoying way or becomes unnecessarily excited about something unimportant, they *make a song and dance about it.* *OK, you don't like carrots.  Don't make a song and dance about it!* |
| **mind your own business! *(rude)*** | Telling someone to *mind their own business* is a (rude) way of saying that they are too interested in what others are doing, or that they are interfering in something that does not concern them. *Don't tell me what to do - just mind your own business!* |

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| **more heat than light** | If a discussion or debate generates*more heat than light*, it causes anger or intense reaction but doesn't clarify anything. *The meeting that was held to discuss the problem generated more heat than light!* |
| **quick temper** | Someone who has a*quick temper*gets angry very easily. *He makes me nervous - he's got such a quick temper.* |
| **rant and rave** | If you*rant and rave*about something, you protest noisily and forcefully. *The old man ranted and raved about the new waste collection system, but he had to accept it.* |
| **rap on the knuckles** | If someone gets a*rap on/across the knuckles,* they are punished or reprimanded, but not very severely, as a reminder not to do something again. *Andy got a rap on the knuckles for coming home late.* |
| **road rage** | Aggressive driving habits sometimes resulting in violence against other drivers is called *road rage. A number of accidents today are a direct result of road rage.* |
| **scream blue murder** | People who*scream blue murder*shout or complain very loudly as if something very serious has happened. *The crowd started screaming blue murder when the football match was interrupted.* |
| **see red** | If someone*sees red*, they suddenly become very angry or annoyed. *Discrimination of any kind makes me see red.* |
| **short fuse** | When someone *has a short fuse*, they are likely to become angry easily or quickly. *Be careful how you explain the situation. The boss has a short fuse these days!* |
| **skin someone alive** | If you are angry and threaten to *skin someone alive,* you mean that you are going to punish them severely. *If that kid damages my again, I'll skin him alive!* |
| **smooth someone's ruffled feathers** | If you*smooth someone's ruffled feathers,*you make that person feel less angry or offended. *Tom took the criticism badly but James managed to smooth his ruffled feathers.* |
| **steamed up** | If someone *gets steamed up* about something, they become very angry, excited or enthusiastic about it. *Calm down - there's no need to get all steamed up about it!* |
| **step on someone's toes** | If you annoy or irritate someone by intervening in a situation that is their responsibility, you*step on their toes.* *I could offer some advice but I'm afraid of stepping on someone's toes.* |
| **stick in one's throat** | If something *sticks in your throat* (or *craw*), it is very difficult to accept and makes you angry or resentful. The way he treats women really sticks in my throat! |
| **a *storm* is brewing** | If you say that *a storm is brewing*, you mean that the atmosphere indicates that there is going to be trouble, probably with outbursts of anger or emotion. *As soon as we saw Pete's face, we knew there was a storm brewing.* |

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| **tear a strip off** | If you*tear a strip off someone,* you reprimand them severely for doing something wrong. *The teacher tore a strip off Charlie for not doing his homework.* |
| **tell a thing or two** | If you*tell someone a thing or two,* you express you thoughts (usually criticism) very clearly. *'Let me tell you a thing or two about your son's behaviour' said John to the boy's father.* |
| **that makes my blood boil!** | If something *makes your blood boil,* it makes you really angry. *His condescending attitude made my blood boil!* |
| **that's going too far!** | If you *go too far,* you do something that is considered extreme or unacceptable. *Stealing is bad, but stealing from a poor person is really going too far!* |
| **that takes the biscuit!** | This expression refers to something very annoying or irritating. *After waiting for an hour, we were told there no seats left.  That took the biscuit!* |
| **that's the last straw!** | This expression means that this is the latest unpleasant event and that you cannot tolerate the situation any longer. *After an extremely tiring day, when Joe saw the the traffic jam he said : that's the last straw!* |
| **throw a wobbly(or *wobbler*)** | When someone, usually a capricious person,*throws a wobb*ly, they have a fit of nerves or bad temper and lose all self-control. *He's very calm - not the sort of man to throw a wobbly if he doesn't have a clean shirt!* |
| **try someone's patience** | If you find it difficult to be patient with someone because of their irritating attitude or behaviour, you can say that they are*trying your patience.* *His constant interruptions began to try the teacher's patience.* |
| **vent your spleen** | When you vent*your spleen,* you release or express all your anger about something. *Whenever Harry is angry about new government measures, he vents his spleen by writing to newspapers.* |
| **want someone's head on a platter** | If someone makes you so angry that you want them to be punished, you want their*head on a platter.* *He was so angry when he read the article about his family that he wanted the journalist's head on a platter.* |

*English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions*

***Ambition - Determination***

(Idioms, page 1 :  at all costs  → explore all avenues)

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| **at all costs** | If you are determined to obtain or achieve something*at all costs*, you want it regardless of the expense, effort or sacrifice involved. *The journalist was determined at all costs to get a report from the war zone.* |
| **avowed intent** | When someone makes a public declaration of their objective or goal, this is their*avowed intent*. *The avowed intent of the new government is to reduce unemployment.* |
| **beard the lion in his den** | If you visit someone important in the place where they work, in order to challenge him/her or obtain something, *you beard the lion in his den.* *If he continues to refuse my calls, I'll have to beard the lion in his den.* |
| **bee in one's bonnet** | Someone who has a *bee in their bonnet* has an idea which constantly occupies their thoughts. *She's got a bee in her bonnet about moving to New York.* |
| **beyond wildest dreams** | If something is*beyond your wildest dreams*, it is better than you imagined or hoped for. *The research team received a grant from the government that was beyond their wildest dreams.* |
| **blood, sweat and tears** | A project or action which involves *blood,* *sweat and tears*requires a lot of effort and hard work. *His success wasn't due to luck; it was blood, sweat and tears all the way.* |
| **have on the brain** | If you *have something on the brain*, you think or talk abut it all constantly. *Stop talking about golf. You've got golf on the brain!* |
| **buckle down** | If you *buckle down*, you apply yourself with determination to hard work and give it hour full attention. *If you want to pass your exams, you'll have to buckle down and do some serious work.* |
| **dig in your heels** | If you *dig in your heels,* you refuse to do something, especially if someone is trying to convince you to do so. *My grandfather dug in his heels and refused to move to an apartment.* |
| **eager beaver** | The term*eager beaver* refers to a person who is hardworking and enthusiastic, sometimes considered overzealous. *The new accountant works all the time -  first to arrive and last to leave. He's a real eager beaver!* |
| **explore all avenues** | If you *explore all avenues*, you try out every possibility in order to obtain a result or find a solution. *We can't say it's impossible until we've explored all avenues.* |

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| **fight tooth and nail** | If you*fight tooth and nail*for something, you fight with energy and determination. *The Transport Minister fought tooth and nail to have the proposed road safety law accepted.* |
| **first out of the gate** | If you are*first out of the gate,* you are the first to make a start at something that others have also accepted to do. *Sandra was so enthusiastic about the project that she was first out of the gate.* |
| **fly by seat of pants** | If yo*u fly by the seat of your pants,*you do something without any knowledge or experience, using only your instinct and hoping that you will succeed. *Without any formal training, he decided to fly by the seat of his pants and try his luck in New York.* |
| **go the extra mile** | If you *go the extra mile,* you do more than what is expected of you. *You can count on Tom; he's always willing to go the extra mile.* |
| **go to great lengths  (or pains)** | When trying to achieve something, if you*go to great lengths,* you do everything that is possible in order to succeed. *The two parties went to great lengths to reach an agreement.* |
| **go into overdrive** | If someone or something *goes into overdrive*, they begin to work very hard or start to perform intensely. *At the start of every new collection my imagination goes into overdrive.* |
| **going places** | To say that someone is *going places* means that they show talent and ability that will no doubt lead to a successful future. *Even at college it was obvious that Paul was going places.* |
| **keep nose to grindstone** | A person who*keeps their nose to the grindstone* is someone who concentrates on working  or studying hard. *She was so determined to get into the college of her choice that she kept her nose to the grindstone all year.* |
| **hang in there** | This expression is used to encourage someone to persevere and not give up in spite of the difficult circumstances. *I know the atmosphere is very tense, but just hang in there and things will eventually calm down.* |
| **hang on by fingernails** | When you *hang on by the fingernails,* you succeed in continuing to do something in a very difficult situation. *The restaurant is losing more and more customers; the owner is just hanging on by his fingernails.* |
| **have one's heart set on** | Someone who *has their heart set on* something is determined to obtain something they want very much. *From an early age Tiger had his heart set on becoming a professional golfer.* |
| **hell-bent on something** | If you are *hell-bent on doing something*, you are recklessly determined to do it, even if it is dangerous or stupid. *Although he is still weak, he's hell-bent on playing the match.* |
| **hitch one's wagon to a star** | Someone who *hitches their wagon to a star* has great ambitions and is very determined to reach their goal. *At an early age she decided to hitch her wagon to a star and become famous.* |
| **a long row to hoe** | A difficult task, assignment or undertaking that will take a long time is*a long row to hoe.*  *Getting through medical school is going to be a long row to hoe.* |

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| **make headway** | If you *make headway*, you make progress in what you are trying to achieve. *Investigators have made little headway in their search for the causes of the catastrophe.* |
| **mean business** | If someone*means business,* they are serious about what they announce. *The boss says that in future any missing material will be reported to the police, and he looks as though he means business.* |
| **never say die** | You can say *'never say die*' to encourage someone to persevere in their efforts and not give up or abandon their project. *Keep going - it's too soon to give up. Never say die!* |
| **paddle your own canoe** | If you *paddle your own canoe,* you do what you want to do without help or interference from anyone. *He decided to paddle his own canoe and set up his own business.* |
| **pound the pavement** | Someone who *pounds the pavement* walks the streets or goes from company to company, usually in search of employment. (You can also pound the pavement in an effort to raise funds or gain support for a cause.) *Charlie is out there pounding the pavement since he lost his job.* |
| **pull out all the stops** | If you*pull out all the stops*, you do everything you can to make something successful. *We'll have to pull out all the stops to get the store ready for the opening day.* |
| **punch above one's weight** | If you *punch above your weight*, you try to perform at a level that is beyond your ability. *She submitted her idea for the 'invention of the year' award, knowing that she was punching above her weight.* |
| **reach for the moon** | If you *reach for the moon*, you are very ambitious and try to achieve something even if it is difficult. *His parents were hardworking people who encouraged their children to reach for the moon.* |
| **raise/lower your sights** | If you*raise/lower your sights,* your raise or lower your expectations, or you are more or less ambitious. *He had to lower his sights and accept a less well-paid job than what he hoped for.* |
| **sink your teeth into** | If you *sink your teeth into something,* you do it with a lot of energy and enthusiasm. *When Julie got promoted, she immediately sank her teeth into her new job.* |
| **sky's the limit** | To say*the sky's the limit*means that there is no limit to the possibility of success or progress for someone or something. *"How successful do you think the project will be?" "Who knows ... the sky's the limit!"* |
| **stand one's ground** | If you *stand your ground* you maintain your position and refuse to yield or give way. *He claimed innocence and stood his ground in spite of the repeated accusations.* |
| **stick to one's guns** | If you *stick to your guns,* you show determination when faced with opposition. *The government stuck to its guns in spite of the criticism.* |
| **stop at nothing** | Someone who would*stop at nothing*would do anything, even something illegal or immoral, to obtain what they want. *He's stop at nothing if there was a possibility of making money.* |
| **wait in the wings** | If someone is *waiting in the wings,* they are waiting for an opportunity to take action, especially to replace someone else in their job or position. *There are many young actors waiting in the wings ready to show their talent.* |

*English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions*

***Agreements - Arrangements***

(idioms :    in black and white  → with one voice)

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| **in black and white** | To say that something is*in black and white*means that there is written proof of it. *It's an obligation.  It's written in black and white in your contract.* |
| **clinch a deal** | In a business relationship, if you*clinch a deal*, you reach agreement on a proposal or offer. *Tom's final argument enabled us to clinch the deal.* |
| **a done deal** | This expression is used to refer to an agreement or decision which has been reached on a certain matter *We're still considering several proposals, so it's not a done deal yet.* |
| **gentleman's agreement** | When an agreement is neither written nor signed, because the two parties trust each other completely, it is called a *gentleman's agreement.* *It was a gentleman's agreement. I can't change my mind now!* |
| **a matter of form** | If you do something out of politeness, or because it is accepted practice or the usual way of doing something, you do it as a matter of form. *I know we're in agreement, but I need your signature as a matter of form.* |
| **sign on the dotted line** | If you*sign on the dotted line*, you formally give your consent to something by signing an official document. *I consulted my lawyer before signing on the dotted line.* |
| **signed, sealed and delivered** | When an agreement, contract or treaty is *signed, sealed and delivered,* all the legal documents have been signed. *It is hoped that the agreement will be signed, sealed and delivered before the end of the week.* |
| **square deal** | A transaction that is fair and honest, or an equitable arrangement, is called a*square deal. We've used the same supplier for years and we always get a square deal.* |
| **no strings attached** | If something is offered or obtained with*no strings attached*, it comes without any special conditions or restrictions. *I managed to get a loan with no strings attached.* |
| **with one voice** | Two or more groups or organisations who are in complete agreement are said to speak *with one voice.* *For once the government and the trade unions are speaking with one voice.* |

*English Idioms & Idiomatic Expressions*

***Age***

(idioms :    get on in years  → put years on)

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| **get on in years** | Someone who is*getting on in years* is growing old. *My grandmother is getting on in years.  She's no longer able to look after her home without help.* |
| **knee-high to a grasshopper** | This term refers to a very young and therefore small child. *Look how tall you are! Last time I saw you, you were knee-high to a grasshopper!* |
| **long in the tooth** | A person who is *long in the tooth* is a bit too old to do something. *She's a bit long in the tooth for a cabaret dancer, isn't she?* |
| **mutton dressed as lamb** | This expression refers to a middle-aged woman who tries to look younger by dressing in clothes designed for younger people. *The style doesn't suit her - it has a mutton-dressed-as-lamb effect on her!* |
| **no spring chicken** | To say that someone is no*spring chicken* means that they are quite old or well past their youth. *How old is the owner? I don't know but she's no spring chicken!* |
| **over the hill** | If a person is *over the hill*, they have reached an age when they can no longer perform as well as before. *Gran! You say you're over the hill, but you're a super cook!* |
| **(live to a) ripe old age** | This expression means to live until you are very old. *"If you lead a healthy life you'll live to a ripe old age." said the doctor.* |
| **rob the cradle** | If you*rob the cradle,*you have a romantic relationship with someone who is much younger than yourself. *My uncle Ted is dating a twenty-year-old girl.  That's really robbing the cradle!* |
| **senior moment** | A momentary lapse of memory, especially in older people, or an absent-minded action such as putting the cereals in the refrigerator, is humorously referred to as *having a senior moment.*  *I found the phone in the cupboard. I must have had a senior moment!* |
| **silver surfer** | A *silver surfer*is an elderly person who uses the internet. *After just a few questions my grandmother was ready to join the silver surfers.* |
| **put years on** | If an event or difficult situation *puts years on someone,*it makes them look or feel much older. *I hardly recognized Mr. Brown.  His illness has put years on him.* |