

## List of idioms and Phrases

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

### **A**

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

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

**A Blessing In Disguise:**

Something good that isn't recognized at first.

**A Chip On Your Shoulder:**

Being upset for something that happened in the past.

**A Dime A Dozen:**

Anything that is common and easy to get.

**A Doubting Thomas:**

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

**A Drop in the Bucket:**

A very small part of something big or whole.

**A Fool And His Money Are Easily Parted:**

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

**A House Divided Against Itself Cannot Stand:**

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

**A Leopard Can't Change His Spots:**

You cannot change who you are.

**A Penny Saved Is A Penny Earned:**

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

**A Picture Paints a Thousand Words:**

A visual presentation is far more descriptive than words.

**A Piece of Cake:**

A task that can be accomplished very easily.

**A Slap on the Wrist:**

A very mild punishment.

**A Taste Of Your Own Medicine:**

When you are mistreated the same way you mistreat others.

**A Toss-Up:**

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

**Actions Speak Louder Than Words:**

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

**Add Fuel To The Fire:**

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

**Against The Clock:**

Rushed and short on time.

**All Bark And No Bite:**

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

**All Greek to me:**

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

**All In The Same Boat:**

When everyone is facing the same challenges.

**An Arm And A Leg:**

Very expensive. A large amount of money.

**An Axe To Grind:**

To have a dispute with someone.

**Apple of My Eye:**

Someone who is cherished above all others.

**As High As A Kite:**

Anything that is high up in the sky.

**At The Drop Of A Hat:**

Willing to do something immediately.

**B**

**Back Seat Driver:**

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

**Back To Square One:**

Having to start all over again.

**Back To The Drawing Board:**

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

**Baker's Dozen:**

Thirteen.

**Barking Up The Wrong Tree:**

A mistake made in something you are trying to achieve.

**Beat A Dead Horse:**

To force an issue that has already ended.

**Beating Around The Bush:**

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

**Bend Over Backwards:**

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

**Between A Rock And A Hard Place:**

Stuck between two very bad options.

**Bite Off More Than You Can Chew:**

To take on a task that is way to big.

**Bite Your Tongue:**

To avoid talking.

**Blood Is Thicker Than Water:**

The family bond is closer than anything else.

**Blue Moon:**

A rare event or occurrence.

**Break A Leg:**

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

opposite.

**Buy A Lemon:**

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

**C**

**Can't Cut The Mustard :**

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

**Cast Iron Stomach:**

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

**Charley Horse:**

Stiffness in the leg / A leg cramp.

**Chew someone out:**

Verbally scold someone.

**Chip on his Shoulder:**

Angry today about something that occurred in the past.

**Chow Down:**

To eat.

**Close but no Cigar:**

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

**Cock and Bull Story:**

An unbelievable tale.

**Come Hell Or High Water:**

Any difficult situation or obstacle.

**Crack Someone Up:**

To make someone laugh.

**Cross Your Fingers:**

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

**Cry Over Spilt Milk:**

When you complain about a loss from the past.

**Cry Wolf:**

Intentionally raise a false alarm.

**Cup Of Joe:**

A cup of coffee.

**Curiosity Killed The Cat:**

Being Inquisitive can lead you into a dangerous situation.

**Cut to the Chase:**

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

**D**

**Dark Horse:**

One who was previously unknown and is now prominent.

**Dead Ringer:**

100% identical. A duplicate.

**Devil's Advocate:**

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

**Dog Days of Summer:**

The hottest days of the summer season.

**Don't count your chickens before they hatch:**

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

**Don't Look A Gift Horse In The Mouth:**

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

**Don't Put All Your Eggs In One Basket:**

Do not put all your resources in one possibility.

**Doozy:**

Something outstanding.

**Down To The Wire:**

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

**Drastic Times Call For Drastic Measures:**

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

**Drink like a fish:**

To drink very heavily.

**Drive someone up the wall:**

To irritate and/or annoy very much.

**Dropping Like Flies:**

A large number of people either falling ill or dying.

**Dry Run:**

Rehearsal.

**E**

**Eighty Six:**

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

**Elvis has left the building:**

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

**Ethnic Cleansing:**

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

**Every Cloud Has A Silver Lining:**

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

**Everything But The Kitchen Sink:**

Almost everything and anything has been included.

**Excuse my French:**

Please forgive me for cussing.

**Cock and Bull Story:**

An unbelievable tale.

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**E**

**Feeding Frenzy:**

An aggressive attack on someone by a group.

**Field Day:**

An enjoyable day or circumstance.

**Finding Your Feet:**

To become more comfortable in whatever you are doing.

**Finger lickin' good:**

A very tasty food or meal.

**Fixed In Your Ways:**

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

**Flash In The Pan:**

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

**Flea Market:**

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

**Flesh and Blood:**

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

**Flip The Bird:**

To raise your middle finger at someone.

**Foam at the Mouth:**

To be enraged and show it.

**Fools' Gold:**

Iron pyrites, a worthless rock that resembles real gold.

**French Kiss:**

An open mouth kiss where tongues touch.

**From Rags To Riches:**

To go from being very poor to being very wealthy.

**Fuddy-duddy:**

An old-fashioned and foolish type of person.

**Full Monty:**

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

**Funny Farm:**

A mental institutional facility.

**G**

**Get Down to Brass Tacks:**

To become serious about something.

**Get Over It:**

To move beyond something that is bothering you.

**Get Up On The Wrong Side Of The Bed:**

Someone who is having a horrible day.

**Get Your Walking Papers:**

Get fired from a job.

**Give Him The Slip:**

To get away from. To escape.

**Go Down Like A Lead Balloon:**

To be received badly by an audience.

**Go For Broke:**

To gamble everything you have.

**Go Out On A Limb:**

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

**Go The Extra Mile:**

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

**Good Samaritan:**

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

**Graveyard Shift:**

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

**Great Minds Think Alike:**

Intelligent people think like each other.

**Green Room:**

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

**Gut Feeling:**

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

**H**

**Haste Makes Waste:**

Quickly doing things results in a poor ending.

**Hat Trick:**

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

**Have an Axe to Grind:**

To have a dispute with someone.

**He Lost His Head:**

Angry and overcome by emotions.

**Head Over Heels:**

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

**Hell in a Handbasket:**

Deteriorating and headed for complete disaster.

**High Five:**

Slapping palms above each others heads as celebration gesture.

**High on the Hog:**

Living in Luxury.

**Hit The Books:**

To study, especially for a test or exam.

**Hit The Hay:**

Go to bed or go to sleep.

**Hit The Nail on the Head:**

Do something exactly right or say something exactly right.

**Hit The Sack:**

Go to bed or go to sleep.

**Hocus Pocus:**

In general, a term used in magic or trickery.

**Hold Your Horses:**

Be patient.

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**Icing On The Cake:**

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

**Idle Hands Are The Devil's Tools:**

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

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

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

**In Like Flynn:**

To be easily successful, especially when sexual or romantic.

**In The Bag:**

To have something secured.

**In The Buff:**

Nude.

**In The Heat Of The Moment:**

Overwhelmed by what is happening in the moment.

**In Your Face:**

An aggressive and bold confrontation.

**It Takes Two To Tango:**

A two person conflict where both people are at fault.

**It's A Small World:**

You frequently see the same people in different places.

**It's Anyone's Call:**

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

**Ivy League:**

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

**J**

**Jaywalk:**

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

**Joshing Me:**

Tricking me.

**K**

**Keep An Eye On Him:**

You should carefully watch him.

**Keep body and soul together:**

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

**Keep your chin up:**

To remain joyful in a tough situation.

**Kick The Bucket:**

Die.

**Kitty-corner:**

Diagonally across. Sometimes called Catty-Corner as well.

**Knee Jerk Reaction:**

A quick and automatic response.

**Knock On Wood:**

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

**Know the Ropes:**

To understand the details.

**L**

**Last but not least:**

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

**Lend Me Your Ear:**

To politely ask for someone's full attention.

**Let Bygones Be Bygones:**

To forget about a disagreement or argument.

**Let Sleeping Dogs Lie:**

To avoid restarting a conflict.

**Let The Cat Out Of The Bag:**

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

**Level playing field:**

A fair competition where no side has an advantage.

**Like a chicken with its head cut off:**

To act in a frenzied manner.

**Liquor someone up:**

To get someone drunk.

**Long in the Tooth:**

Old people (or horses).

**Loose Cannon:**

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

**M**

**Make No Bones About:**

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

**Method To My Madness:**

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

**Mumbo Jumbo:**

Nonsense or meaningless speech.

**Mum's the word:**

To keep quiet. To say nothing.

**N**

**Nest Egg:**

Savings set aside for future use.

**Never Bite The Hand That Feeds You:**

Don't hurt anyone that helps you.

**New kid on the block:**

Someone new to the group or area.

**New York Minute:**

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

**No Dice:**

To not agree. To not accept a proposition.

**No Room to Swing a Cat:**

An unusually small or confined space.

**Not Playing With a Full Deck:**

Someone who lacks intelligence.

**O**

**Off On The Wrong Foot:**

Getting a bad start on a relationship or task.

**Off The Hook:**

No longer have to deal with a tough situation.

**Off the Record:**

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

**On Pins And Needles:**

Anxious or nervous, especially in anticipation of something.

**On The Fence:**

Undecided.

**On The Same Page:**

When multiple people all agree on the same thing.

**Out Of The Blue:**

Something that suddenly and unexpectedly occurs.

**Out On A Limb:**

When someone puts themselves in a risky situation.

**Out On The Town:**

To enjoy yourself by going out.

**Over My Dead Body:**

When you absolutely will not allow something to happen.

**Over the Top:**

Very excessive.

**P**

**Pass The Buck:**

Avoid responsibility by giving it to someone else.

**Pedal to the metal:**

To go full speed, especially while driving a vehicle.

**Peeping Tom:**

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

**Pick up your ears:**

To listen very carefully.

**Pig In A Poke:**

A deal that is made without first examining it.

**Pig Out :**

To eat alot and eat it quickly.

**Pipe Down:**

To shut-up or be quiet.

**Practice Makes Perfect:**

By constantly practicing, you will become better.

**Pull the plug:**

To stop something. To bring something to an end.

**Pulling Your Leg:**

Tricking someone as a joke.

**Put a sock in it:**

To tell noisy person or a group to be quiet.

**Q**

**Queer the pitch:**

Destroy or ruin a plan.

**R**

**Raincheck:**

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

**Raining Cats and Dogs:**

A very loud and noisy rain storm.

**Ring Fencing:**

Separated usual judgement to guarantee protection, especially project funds.

**Rise and Shine:**

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

**Rome Was Not Built In One Day:**

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

**Rule Of Thumb:**

A rough estimate.

**Run out of steam:**

To be completely out of energy.

**S**

**Saved By The Bell:**

Saved at the last possible moment.

**Scapegoat:**

Someone else who takes the blame.

**Scot-free:**

To escape and not have to pay.

**Sick As A Dog:**

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

**Sitting Shotgun:**

Riding in the front passenger seat of a car.

**Sixth Sense:**

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

**Skid Row:**

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

**Smell A Rat:**

To detect someone in the group is betraying the others.

**Smell Something Fishy:**

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

**Son of a Gun:**

A scamp.

**Southpaw:**

Someone who is left-handed.

**Spitting Image:**

The exact likeness or kind.

**Start From Scratch:**

To do it all over again from the beginning.

**I**

**The Ball Is In Your Court:**

It is your decision this time.

**The Best Of Both Worlds:**

There are two choices and you have them both.

**The Bigger They Are The Harder They Fall:**

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

**The Last Straw:**

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

**The Whole Nine Yards:**

Everything. All of it.

**Third times a charm:**

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

**Tie the knot:**

To get married.

**Til the cows come home:**

A long time.

**To Make A Long Story Short:**

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

**To Steal Someone's Thunder:**

To take the credit for something someone else did.

**Tongue And Cheek:**

humor, not to be taken serious.

**Turn A Blind Eye:**

Refuse to acknowledge something you know is real or legit.

**Twenty three skidoo:**

To be turned away.

**U**

**Under the weather:**

Feeling ill or sick.

**Up a blind alley:**

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

**Use Your Loaf:**

Use your head. Think smart.

**V**

**Van Gogh's ear for music:**

Tone deaf.

**Variety Is The Spice Of Life:**

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

**W**

**Wag the Dog:**

A diversion away from something of greater importance.

**Water Under The Bridge:**

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

**Wear Your Heart On Your Sleeve:**

To openly and freely express your emotions.

**When It Rains, It Pours:**

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

**When Pigs Fly :**

Something that will never ever happen.

**Wild and Woolly:**

Uncultured and without laws.

**Wine and Dine:**

When somebody is treated to an expensive meal.

**Without A Doubt:**

For certain.

**X**

**X marks the spot:**

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

**Y**

**You Are What You Eat:**

In order to stay healthy you must eat healthy foods.

**You Can't Judge A Book By Its Cover:**

Decisions shouldn't be made primarily on appearance.

**You Can't Take it With You:**

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

**Your Guess Is As Good As Mine:**

I have no idea.

**Z**

**Zero Tolerance:**

No crime or law breaking