

Common Idioms and What They Mean

- **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**

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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.
- **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.
- **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 too 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

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opposite.

- **Buy A Lemon**

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

- **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**

To scold someone verbally.

- **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.

- **Crack Someone Up**

To make someone laugh.

- **Cross Your Fingers**

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

- **Cry Over Spilled Milk**

When you complain about a loss from the past.

- **Cry Wolf**

To raise a false alarm intentionally.

- **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.

- **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

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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 you are 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.
- **Eighty Six**
A certain item is no longer available. It can also mean to throw away something.
- **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 using bad language.
- **Feeding Frenzy**
An aggressive attack on someone by a group.
- **Field Day**
An enjoyable day or circumstance.
- **Finding Your Feet**

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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**
Living material of which people are made of, or it can refer to someone's family (specifically children).
- **Foam At The Mouth**
To be enraged and show it.
- **Fools' Gold**
Pyrite; a worthless rock that resembles real gold.
- **From Rags To Riches**
To go from being very poor to being very wealthy.
- **Fuddy-Duddy**
An old-fashioned and foolish type of person.
- **Funny Farm**
A mental institutional facility.
- **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.

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- **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 A.M. to 8:00 A.M. (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.
- **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 home runs, 3 touchdowns, 3 soccer goals, etc.
- **Have An Ax 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.
- **High Five**
Slapping palms above each others' heads as a 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.
- **Hold Your Horses**
Be patient.
- **Icing On The Cake**
When you already have it good and get something on top of what you already have.
- **Idle Hands Are The Devil's Tools**

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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, and so on.
- **In The Bag**
To have something secured.
- **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.
- **Jaywalk**
Crossing the street (from the middle) without using the crosswalk.
- **Joshing Me**
Tricking me.
- **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.
- **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.
- **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.

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- **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 supposed 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.
- **Long In The Tooth**
Old people (or horses).
- **Loose Cannon**
Someone who is unpredictable and can cause damage if not kept in check.
- **Make No Bones About**
To state a fact so there are no doubts or objections.
- **Method To My Madness**
Strange 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.
- **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.
- **Off On The Wrong Foot**
Getting a bad start on a relationship or task.
- **Off The Hook**

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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 himself 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.
- **Pass The Buck**
Avoid responsibility by giving it to someone else.
- **Pedal To The Metal**
To go full speed, especially while driving a vehicle.
- **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 a lot 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.
- **Raincheck**

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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 judgment 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 it's going to take time.

- **Rule Of Thumb**

A rough estimate.

- **Run Out Of Steam**

To be completely out of energy.

- **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.

- **The Ball Is In Your Court**

It is your decision this time.

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- **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 Time's 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 In Cheek**
Humor, not to be taken seriously.
- **Turn A Blind Eye**
Refuse to acknowledge something you know is real or legit.
- **Under The Weather**
Feeling ill or sick.
- **Up A Blind Alley**
Going down a course of action that leads to a bad outcome.
- **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.
- **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.

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- **Wild And Woolly**
Uncultured and without laws.
- **Wine And Dine**
When somebody is treated to an expensive meal.
- **Without A Doubt**
For certain.
- **X Marks The Spot**
A phrase that is said when someone finds something he/she has been looking for.
- **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.
- **Your Guess Is As Good As Mine**
I have no idea.
- **Zero Tolerance**
No crime or law breaking big or small will be overlooked.