I'm not a bot

In this article, we will explore 93 of the most common business idioms and phrases, along with their meanings and examples, and learn how they can be used in professional settings. In the world of business, communication is key. It’s not just about what you say, but how you say it that can make a significant impact. This is where business idioms and expressions come into play. But, what are business idioms? Before we define business idioms, it’s important to understand exactly what idioms are. Idioms are phrases or expressions that convey meanings different from the literal interpretations of the individual words. They help to illustrate points more clearly and can make communication more engaging and relatable. For example, the idiom “break the ice” means to initiate conversation in a way that relieves tension or awkwardness, which is different from the literal idea of breaking a piece of ice. Business idioms are phrases or expressions that convey a meaning that differs from the literal meaning of the words, which can be applied in a business context. For example, saying “let’s get the ball rolling” instead of “let’s start” conveys a sense of momentum and action. Similarly, “think outside the box” encourages innovative thinking more effectively than simply saying “be creative.” Having a solid understanding of these idioms is useful for anyone looking to succeed in a professional environment and they are therefore an important part of Business English. So, with that in mind, let’s take a look at 93 common business idioms and phrases. Knowing business idioms can help non-native speakers sound more fluent and confident, while for native English speakers, it ensures clarity and strengthens their ability to persuade and motivate. Business idioms are frequently used in professional settings – from boardroom discussions and negotiations to emails and casual workplace conversations – to describe situations, concepts, and strategies. Many of them are among the most commonly used English idioms. By familiarizing yourself with them you’ll be better equipped to navigate the sometimes complex landscape of business communication. So, if you want to impress your colleagues or understand the lingo in your new job, read on! Meaning: An approximate number or estimate. Example: “Can you give me a ballpark figure of the project’s total cost?” Meaning: A difficult problem or person to deal with. Example: “The new market is proving to be a tough nut to crack.” Meaning: More advanced or innovative than others. Example: “Our company needs to stay ahead of the curve in technology.” Meaning: More successful or innovative than the competition. Example: “Our new product has kept us ahead of the pack in the industry.” Meaning: To start over from the beginning. Example: “Our plan didn’t work out, so it’s back to square one on the marketing campaign.” Meaning: To start over because a previous attempt failed. Example: “The client rejected our proposal, so it’s back to the drawing board.” Meaning: Accumulated work or tasks that need to be completed. Example: “We need to clear this backlog before we can take on new clients.” Meaning: An approximate estimate or guess. Example: “Can you give me a ballpark number of the costs involved?” Meaning: Activities that occur out of public view. Example: “There’s a lot of hard work behind the scenes to make this event successful.” Meaning: The overall perspective or long-term view of a situation. Example: “Let’s not get bogged down in details and look at the big picture.” Meaning: Creative thinking that is not limited by current beliefs or practices. Example: “We need some blue sky thinking to solve this issue.” Meaning: The most important fact or outcome; financial profit or loss. Example: “The bottom line is that we need to increase our sales.” Meaning: To neither make a profit nor incur a loss. Example: “We need to sell 1,000 units to break even.” Meaning: To follow the rules or regulations exactly. Example: “Our auditor is very strict and does everything by the book.” Meaning: To stop working on something. Example: “Let’s call it a day and finish the rest tomorrow.” Meaning: A shift in activity or approach. Example: “The new project will be a nice change of pace from our usual work.” Meaning: To return to a previous topic or issue. Example: “Let’s circle back to the budget discussion after lunch.” Meaning: To resolve any misunderstandings or tension. Example: “We need to clear the air before we move forward with this project.” Meaning: To dominate a particular market. Example: “Our goal is to corner the market on eco-friendly products.” Meaning: To perform detailed calculations or analyses. Example: “We need to crunch the numbers before making a final decision.” Meaning: To do something in the easiest or most inexpensive way. Example: “We can’t afford to cut corners on this quality inspection.” Meaning: Very competitive and ruthless. Example: “The competition in this industry is cut-throat.” Meaning: To get to the point without wasting time. Example: “Let’s cut to the chase and discuss the main issues.” Meaning: To pay attention to details. Example: “Make sure you dot your i’s and cross your t’s before submitting the report.” Meaning: In the future. Example: “This decision will benefit us down the line.” Meaning: To delay or be slow in doing something. Example: “We can’t drag our feet on this project; the deadline is approaching.” Meaning: A person who is very enthusiastic and hard-working. Example: “She’s an eager beaver and always the first to arrive at work.” Meaning: Something gained easily can be lost easily. Example: “He wasn’t too upset about losing the money; he said, ‘easy come, easy go.'” Meaning: To confront the consequences of one’s actions. Example: “We have to face the music and admit our mistakes to the client.” Meaning: To speed up the process of something. Example: “We need to fast track this project to meet the deadline.” Meaning: To provide someone with necessary information. Example: “Can you fill me in on the details of the meeting?” Meaning: A strategy or plan for achieving success. Example: “What’s our game plan for the new product launch?” Meaning: To start working seriously on something. Example: “Let’s get down to business and start the meeting.” Meaning: To start something. Example: “We need to get the ball rolling on this new campaign.” Meaning: To start a project or business. Example: “It took a lot of effort, but we finally got the new branch off the ground.” Meaning: To be wasted or lost. Example: “All our efforts will go down the drain if we don’t get funding.” Meaning: To make a special effort to achieve something. Example: “Our customer service team always goes the extra mile.” Meaning: To rise to a very high level. Example: “Sales have gone through the roof since the new product launch.” Meaning: Something that is not clearly defined. Example: “There’s a lot of gray area in the new regulations.” Meaning: Unable to act due to restrictions or limitations. Example: “I’d love to help, but my hands are tied by company policy.” Meaning: To start something and proceed at a fast pace. Example: “We need to hit the ground running with this new project.” Meaning: In a brief summary. Example: “In a nutshell, we need to increase our sales by 20%.” Meaning: At the peak of activity. Example: “The conference is in full swing and everything is going smoothly.” Meaning: In control of a situation. Example: “With the new promotion, she’s in the driver’s seat now.” Meaning: Informed and involved in a particular matter. Example: “Keep me in the loop about any changes to the schedule.” Meaning: To stay focused on the main objective. Example: “We need to keep our eye on the ball and not get distracted.” Meaning: To learn how to do a particular job or task. Example: “It will take a few weeks for the new hires to learn the ropes.” Meaning: To start an activity or process. Example: “The project deadline is tight, so let’s get the ball rolling as soon as possible.” Meaning: An attempt or effort that has a low probability of success. Example: “It’s a long shot, but we should try to win that contract.” Meaning: To achieve significant financial success. Example: “They made a killing with their new software product.” Meaning: To miss an opportunity. Example: “We need to act fast, or we’ll miss the boat on this investment.” 52. Move the Goalposts Meaning: To change the rules or targets in a way that makes something more difficult. Example: “Every time we meet their demands, they move the goalposts.” Meaning: Something that is very obvious or easy. Example: “Accepting their offer was a no-brainer.” Meaning: Without any conditions or obligations. Example: “They offered us the sponsorship deal with no strings attached.” Meaning: Not going to work or be accepted. Example: “That excuse is not going to fly with the boss.” 56. On the Same Page Meaning: In agreement or understanding with others. Example: “Let’s make sure we’re all on the same page before we proceed.” Meaning: Exposed or revealed. Example: “We need to get these issues out in the open to resolve them.” Meaning: Not informed about something. Example: “I’ve been out of the loop since I was on vacation.” Meaning: To risk everything on a single venture. Example: “Diversify your investments; don’t put all your eggs in one basket.” Meaning: To do things in the wrong order. Example: “Planning the celebration before signing the contract is putting the cart before the horse.” Meaning: To set a higher standard. Example: “Our new product aims to raise the bar in the industry.” Meaning: To understand the hidden meaning or truth. Example: “You need to read between the lines to grasp the full implications.” Meaning: Excessive bureaucracy or adherence to rules. Example: “We need to cut through the red tape to get this project approved.” Meaning: To cause problems or disrupt a situation. Example: “Let’s not rock the boat until the deal is finalized.” Meaning: To prepare to work hard. Example: “It’s time to roll up our sleeves and tackle this challenge.” Meaning: Something that is likely to be successful. Example: “Investing in technology stocks is a safe bet these days.” Meaning: In the same situation as others. Example: “We’re all in the same boat when it comes to budget cuts.” Meaning: To agree with someone. Example: “They didn’t see eye to eye on the new marketing strategy.” Meaning: To continue doing something until it is finished. Example: “We need to see this project through to the end.” Meaning: To end a relationship or agreement. Example: “We decided to sever ties with the supplier due to quality issues.” Meaning: To reject or criticize something. Example: “The board shot down our proposal.” Meaning: To be undecided or not to take sides. Example: “You can’t sit on the fence any longer; you need to decide.” Meaning: Light, casual conversation typically about non-controversial topics, often used to break the ice and establish rapport. Example: “We engaged in some small talk about the weather before starting the meeting.” Meaning: A situation without problems or difficulties. Example: “After the initial hiccups, it was smooth sailing.” Meaning: To maintain your position or viewpoint. Example: “Despite the criticism, she stood her ground on the issue.” Meaning: To take responsibility or initiative. Example: “We need someone to step up to the plate and lead this project.” Meaning: To discuss something privately or at a later time. Example: “Let’s take it offline and discuss the details after the meeting.” Meaning: To confront a problem directly. Example: “We need to take the bull by the horns and address the budget issues.” Meaning: To persuade someone to do something. Example: “He talked me into investing in the new venture.” Meaning: To persuade someone not to do something. Example: “I managed to talk her out of quitting her job.” Meaning: It is now your responsibility to take action. Example: “I’ve done my part, so the ball is in your court.” Meaning: An obvious problem or issue that people avoid discussing. Example: “We need to address the elephant in the room—the declining sales figures.” Meaning: At the last possible moment. Example: “They submitted their proposal at the eleventh hour.” Meaning: To think creatively and innovatively. Example: “We need to think outside the box to solve this problem.” Meaning: Time is a valuable resource, and wasting time is equivalent to losing money. Example: “We need to streamline our processes because time is money in this industry.” Meaning: The allotted time has ended. Example: “Time’s up for submitting your applications.” Meaning: To make contact or communicate with someone. Example: “Let’s touch base next week to review the progress.” Meaning: To persuade someone to do something. Example: “I’ll try to twist his arm to get him to attend the meeting.” Meaning: Uncertain or undecided. Example: “The plans are still up in the air.” Meaning: A difficult struggle or challenge. Example: “Convincing the board to change their minds will be an uphill battle.” Meaning: To have control or an advantage in a situation. Example: “With our new patent, we have the upper hand in the market.” Meaning: Fully informed or up-to-date with the latest information or developments. Example: “We need to get the new team member up to speed on the project before the next meeting.” Meaning: Information spread by people talking to each other. Example: “Our business relies heavily on word of mouth for new clients.” That ends our list of business idioms. Whether you’re aiming to raise the bar in your communication skills or striving to ensure everyone is on the same page, these idioms can hopefully give you the upper hand and allow you to impress everyone with your new vocabulary. So, don’t let this opportunity go down the drain. Take the time to learn these idioms and expressions and see how they can enhance your professional interactions, making your climb up the corporate ladder a bit more like smooth sailing. Enjoy learning about these idioms? You might also like to check out: In this article, we have compiled a list of 119 common English idioms with their meanings and examples of how they can be used in everyday conversation. However, before we get started it’s important to understand what idioms are. Idioms are phrases or expressions that convey a figurative meaning that differs from the literal meaning of the words used. The Oxford Learner’s Dictionary defines an idiom as “a group of words whose meaning is different from the meanings of the individual words.” For example, “a piece of cake” means something that is very easy. This is completely different to its literal meaning. Such idiomatic expressions are often deeply ingrained in the English language and can be challenging for non-native speakers to understand. However, they are an essential part of English communication, and learning them can help you understand and speak English more fluently. So, whether you are an English learner looking to improve your language skills or a native speaker looking to expand your vocabulary, this list of idioms can help you understand and use these expressions with confidence. From idioms related to personal situations and everyday life to those related to business and sport, this list covers a wide range of expressions that you are likely to encounter in spoken and written English. So, let’s dive in and explore the fascinating world of English idioms with these examples: Meaning: Something you already have is more valuable than something you might get in the future. Example: John already has a job offer, but he is considering waiting for a better one. I think he should take the offer because a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. Meaning: Something that seems bad or unlucky at first but turns out to be good. Example: Losing my job was a blessing in disguise because it gave me the opportunity to start my own business. Meaning: Something that is very common and easy to find. Example: People who claim to be professional photographers are a dime a dozen these days. Meaning: Something that is very easy. Example: This math problem is a piece of cake. I can solve it in no time. Meaning: A way of asking someone what they are thinking. Example: You look deep in thought. A penny for your thoughts? Meaning: A picture can convey more information than words. Example: The infographic was so helpful, I immediately understood the concept. It really proved that a picture is worth a thousand words. Meaning: A situation where something starts small and then grows larger and larger, similar to how a snowball rolling down a hill gathers more snow and becomes larger. Example: The new marketing campaign created a snowball effect, with more and more people becoming interested in our product and spreading the word to others. Meaning: What people do is more important than what they say. Example: He promised to help me move, but he never showed up. Actions speak louder than words. Meaning: To make a bad situation even worse. Example: Not only did they cancel my flight, but they also lost my luggage. That really added insult to injury. Meaning: Paying close attention and listening carefully. Example: I’m all ears. Please tell me your story. Meaning: Being clumsy or awkward with your hands. Example: I’m all thumbs when it comes to knitting. I can’t even make a scarf. Meaning: Something that is very expensive. Example: That sports car costs an arm and a leg. Meaning: Being calm and relaxed, even in a stressful situation. Example: Even though she was giving a speech to a large crowd, she was as cool as a cucumber. Meaning: Doing something immediately without any hesitation. Example: If you need my help, I’ll be there at the drop of a hat. Meaning: Starting over from the beginning. Example: The design didn’t work out, so we had to go back to the drawing board. Meaning: Returning to the beginning, starting over. Example: After weeks of negotiations, the two sides still couldn’t agree on a deal, so they went back to square one. Meaning: Making a mistake, going in the wrong direction. Example: If you think I can help you with your math homework, you’re barking up the wrong tree. I’m terrible at math. Meaning: Avoiding the main topic, not getting to the point. Example: Stop beating around the bush and tell me what you really want. Meaning: Going out of one’s way to help someone or accommodate their needs. Example: The hotel staff bent over backwards to make sure we had everything we needed. Meaning: It’s better to do something late than not at all. Example: I know I’m late, but I still want to wish you a happy birthday. Better late than never, right? Meaning: Doing something difficult or unpleasant because it’s necessary. Example: I hate public speaking, but I’ll have to bite the bullet and give the presentation. Meaning: Good luck! Example: Break a leg on your big audition tomorrow! Meaning: Working late into the night. Example: I have a deadline tomorrow, so I’ll be burning the midnight oil tonight. Meaning: Just barely. Example: I passed the test by the skin of my teeth. I got the minimum passing score. Meaning: A complicated or unpleasant situation that, when opened up, creates additional problems. Example: I don’t want to discuss that topic. It’s a can of worms that we don’t need to open. Meaning: Facing a difficult choice with no good options. Example: I’m caught between a rock and a hard place. If I quit my job, I’ll lose my income, but if I stay, I’ll have to work with a boss who makes my life miserable. Meaning: Holding a grudge or feeling angry or resentful about something. Example: He always has a chip on his shoulder because he thinks he doesn’t get the respect he deserves. Meaning: To come very close to achieving something but not quite make it. Example: He was close but no cigar in the race, he finished in second place. Meaning: Dealing with a problem when it happens, not worrying about it before. Example: I’m not going to worry about the presentation until I have to give it. I’ll cross that bridge when I come to it. Meaning: Worrying about something that can’t be changed. Example: Don’t cry over spilled milk. We can’t do anything about the bad weather, so let’s enjoy our vacation anyway. Meaning: Doing something quickly and without attention to detail, often to save time or money. Example: If you keep cutting corners, you’ll end up with a shoddy product that no one wants to buy. Meaning: Taking the opposite point of view to stimulate a discussion. Example: I’ll play devil’s advocate and argue against your proposal to make sure we’ve considered all the possible consequences. Meaning: To begin or start something with enthusiasm or without hesitation. Example: I know you’re nervous about starting your new job, but you just need to dive in and do your best. Meaning: Don’t assume something will happen before it actually does. Example: I know you’re excited about the job offer, but don’t count your chickens before they hatch. You still have to pass the background check. This is one of many popular chicken expressions in the English language. Meaning: Don’t risk everything on one opportunity or investment. Example: I know you’re confident about this one stock, but don’t put all your eggs in one basket. Diversify your portfolio. Meaning: Don’t discard something good while trying to get rid of something bad. Example: I know you don’t like your job, but don’t throw the baby out with the bathwater. You have great coworkers and a good salary. Meaning: A small or insignificant amount. Example: The $5 donation is appreciated, but it’s just a drop in the bucket compared to what we need to raise. Meaning: To eat a lot or have a very big appetite. Example: James eats like a horse, he can finish an entire pizza by himself. Meaning: There is something positive in every negative situation. Example: Even though I lost my job, every cloud has a silver lining. I have more time to spend with my family. Meaning: Accepting the consequences of one’s actions. Example: You made a mistake, and now you have to face the music. Admit your fault and apologize. Meaning: Feeling uncomfortable or out of place in a new situation. Example: I feel like a fish out of water in this fancy restaurant. I’m used to casual dining. Meaning: Experience the same negative treatment you have given to others. Example: He always criticizes other people, but when I criticized him, he got a taste of his own medicine. Meaning: Start something, initiate action. Example: Let’s get the ball rolling and plan the fundraising event. Meaning: To organize yourself or your thoughts, to start behaving in a more responsible and effective way. Example: You need to get your act together if you want to pass the exam. Start studying regularly and focus on your weak areas. Meaning: Assume the best about someone’s intentions, even if they seem suspicious. Example: I don’t think he stole my phone. I’ll give him the benefit of the doubt and look for it before accusing him. Meaning: Do more than is expected or required. Example: If you want to impress your boss, go the extra mile and finish the project ahead of schedule. Meaning: Hear information through rumors or gossip. Example: I heard on the grapevine that the company is laying off employees next month. Meaning: To achieve a great success or make a significant accomplishment. Example: Sarah hit a home run with her presentation at the conference, and now she’s being promoted to lead the new project. Meaning: Be exactly right, hit the target. Example: She hit the nail on the head when she said that the company needs to focus on its core values in order to grow. Meaning: To begin a journey, especially by car or other road vehicles. Example: It’s getting late, and we need to hit the road if we want to make it to the concert on time. Meaning: To go to bed or to go to sleep. Example: “It’s been a long day, I think I’m going to hit the sack early tonight.” Meaning: In trouble or facing negative consequences. Example: He’s in hot water with his boss because he missed a deadline. Meaning: Happening very quickly or suddenly. Example: The accident happened in the blink of an eye. It was over before we even realized what had happened. Meaning: In the same difficult or challenging situation as someone else. Example: We’re all struggling to make ends meet. We’re in the same boat. Meaning: Start something too early or without proper preparation. Example: Don’t jump the gun and start the project before we have all the necessary resources. Meaning: To stay informed about something, especially if it’s a developing situation or a potential opportunity. It suggests that one should be attentive to any signs or hints of what’s happening around them. Example: John is keeping an ear to the ground about the upcoming job openings in his company so that he can apply as soon as the positions become available. Meaning: Stay positive and hopeful even in difficult circumstances. Example: I know things are tough right now, but keep your chin up. Things will get better. Meaning: To hope for a positive outcome or good luck. Example: Keep your fingers crossed for me, I have a job interview tomorrow. Meaning: Accomplish two tasks at the same time. Example: I’m going to the grocery store and the post office. I’ll kill two birds with one stone and do them both in one trip. Meaning: Reveal a secret or confidential information. Example: He let the cat out of the bag and told everyone about the surprise party. Meaning: A sign of hope or relief after a difficult situation. Example: Even though I’m struggling with this project, I can see the light at the end of the tunnel. The deadline is approaching and soon it will be finished. Meaning: Summarize a story or situation. Example: To make a long story short, I missed my flight and had to stay in a hotel overnight. Meaning: To have enough money to cover basic expenses. Example: She works two jobs to make ends meet and support her family. Meaning: Miss an opportunity or chance. Example: I didn’t apply for the scholarship on time. I missed the boat. Meaning: Referring to a specific area or region. Example: I grew up in the same neck of the woods as that famous actor. Meaning: Something that is not one’s preference or interest. Example: I know he loves action movies, but they’re not my cup of tea. Meaning: Working hard and diligently. Example: She put her nose to the grindstone and worked late every night to finish the project on time. Meaning: To have a successful start. Example: Our new product launch is off to a flyer with more than 10,000 units sold in the first week itself. Meaning: Alert, attentive, and responsive. Example: She’s always on the ball and never misses a deadline. Meaning: Being undecided about something, or not committing to a particular option or decision. Example: “I’m on the fence about whether to go to graduate school or start working right away.” Meaning: Happening very rarely. Example: I only see my old college friends once in a blue moon. Meaning: Happening suddenly and unexpectedly. Example: I hadn’t heard from him in years, and then he called me out of the blue. Meaning: Make decisions as you go along, without a plan. Example: I don’t know what time the concert starts, so I’ll just play it by ear and show up when I can. Meaning: Tease or joke with someone, often by making them believe something that is not true. Example: He said he won the lottery, but I think he’s pulling my leg. Meaning: To celebrate in a big or lavish way, usually by spending a lot of money. Example: My sister’s wedding is coming up, and we decided to push the boat out and host the reception at a fancy hotel. Meaning: Be completely open and honest about something. Example: If we’re going to work together, we need to put all our cards on the table and discuss our expectations. Meaning: Say something embarrassing or inappropriate. Example: I put my foot in my mouth when I accidentally insulted her cooking. Meaning: Understand the hidden or implied meaning of something. Example: I think there’s more going on than what she’s saying. I need to read between the lines. Meaning: Do something quickly and without hesitation, even if it’s painful or difficult. Example: Let’s rip off the band-aid and have the difficult conversation we’ve been avoiding. Meaning: A general guideline or rule based on experience. Example: As a rule of thumb, I always arrive 15 minutes early to appointments. Meaning: Have a casual conversation with someone. Example: Let’s shoot the breeze over coffee and catch up. Meaning: Wait patiently and remain in one place. Example: Sit tight while I go get the car. I’ll be back in a few minutes. Meaning: Reveal a secret or confidential information. Example: He spilled the beans and told everyone about the surprise party. Meaning: Take credit for someone else’s ideas or accomplishments. Example: He was about to announce his new invention, but his competitor stole his thunder by announcing a similar product first. Meaning: Maintain your position or opinion, even in the face of opposition. Example: He stuck to his guns and refused to compromise on his principles. Meaning: To take a risk or gamble on something. It can also mean to make a quick decision without much thought or consideration. Example: After losing his job, Dave decided to take a flyer and start his own business, even though he didn’t have much experience in the industry. Note: In 2017, the AP Stylebook modified its recommended spelling from “flier” to “flyer” for all instances of the word “flyer”, except the expression “to take a flier.” You can read more about if you should use flyer or flier here. Meaning: Postpone a meeting or event to a later time. Example: I’m too busy to go to the concert tonight. Can I take a rain check and go another time? Meaning: To be skeptical or doubtful about something. Example: I heard that John won the lottery, but I’m taking it with a pinch of salt. He’s known for telling tall tales. Meaning: Confront a difficult situation directly and with confidence. Example: We need to take the bull by the horns and address the issue before it gets worse. Meaning: It’s your turn to take action or make a decision. Example: I’ve given you all the information you need. Now the ball is in your court. Meaning: The most important or problematic aspects of something are often hidden or hard to see. Example: The project seems straightforward, but the devil is in the details. We need to be careful with the specifics. Meaning: Being proactive and starting early can lead to success. Example: I always start studying for exams early. The early bird gets the worm, after all. Meaning: An issue or problem that everyone is aware of but no one wants to discuss. Example: The company’s financial troubles are the elephant in the room that no one wants to acknowledge. Meaning: The complete or full extent of something. Example: I want to learn everything there is to know about photography. I want to go the whole nine yards. Meaning: To approach a problem or task in a new and innovative way, using creative and unconventional thinking. Example: In order to stay ahead of the competition, we need to start thinking outside the box and come up with new and creative marketing strategies for our business. Meaning: Time is a valuable resource and should be used wisely to achieve maximum productivity and efficiency. Example: I can’t stay and chat for too long, I have a lot of work to do. You know what they say, time is money. Meaning: Being loyal and supportive, even in difficult or challenging times. Example: We’ve been through thick and thin together, and I know I can always count on you. Meaning: Give up or surrender. Example: I’ve been trying to fix the computer for hours, but I think it’s time to throw in the towel and call a professional. Meaning: Get married. Example: They’re finally tying the knot after dating for years. Meaning: Time passes quickly. Example: It’s hard to believe we’ve been friends for 10 years. Time flies! Meaning: Everyone has their own preferences and opinions. Example: I don’t like spicy food, but to each his own. Meaning: Make a positive change in behavior or attitude. Example: I’ve decided to turn over a new leaf and start exercising regularly. Meaning: Persuade or pressure someone to do something they don’t want to do. Example: I didn’t want to go to the party, but my friends twisted my arm and convinced me to go. Meaning: Feeling ill or unwell. Example: I’m feeling under the weather today. I think I’m coming down with a cold. Meaning: A difficult task or situation that requires a lot of effort and persistence to overcome. Example: Getting a new business off the ground is always an uphill battle, but with a good plan and hard work, it can be done. Meaning: Uncertain or undecided. Example: Our plans for the weekend are still up in the air. We haven’t decided what to do yet. Meaning: In a difficult or hopeless situation. Example: If we don’t find a solution soon, we’ll be up the creek without a paddle. Meaning: Think carefully and make a smart decision. Example: Use your head and think before you act. Meaning: Adapt to the customs and practices of the place you are visiting or living in. Example: Even though I don’t usually eat spicy food, when I’m in Thailand, I do as the Romans do and enjoy the local cuisine. Meaning: A fruitless or pointless search or pursuit. Example: I spent hours looking for my lost keys, but it turned out to be a wild goose chase. Meaning: Easily win or succeed without much effort. Example: She’s so talented that she wins hands down in every competition she enters. Meaning: Someone who appears harmless or friendly but is actually dangerous or deceptive. Example: He seemed like a friendly neighbor, but he turned out to be a wolf in sheep’s clothing when we found out he was stealing from us. Meaning: You can provide someone with an opportunity, but you can’t force them to take advantage of it. Example: I gave him all the information he needed to succeed, but he didn’t take any action. You can lead a horse to water, but you can’t make it drink. Meaning: You can’t have everything you want at the same time. Example: You can’t work full-time and travel the world at the same time. You can’t have your cake and eat it too. Meaning: You shouldn’t judge someone or something based on its appearance. Example: She may seem quiet and reserved, but you can’t judge a book by its cover. She’s actually very outgoing and friendly. Meaning: If you miss an opportunity, you may not get another chance. Example: I wanted to buy tickets for the concert, but I waited too long and now they’re sold out. You snooze, you lose. Meaning: I don’t know the answer to a question. Example: I have no idea when the project will be finished. Your guess is as good as mine. Meaning: A strict policy that does not allow for any exceptions or excuses. Example: Our company has a zero-tolerance policy for harassment in the workplace. Meaning: Keep quiet or don’t speak. Example: When we’re in the meeting with the boss, just zip your lip and let me do the talking. That was a piece of cake, right? Idioms are a great way to add color and flavor to your language, whether you’re a native speaker or learning English as a second language. And while their meanings may not be immediately obvious, you’ll quickly pick them up with practice. So, we hope you enjoyed this list of of 119 common English idioms with their meanings and examples. Do you have your own favorite idiom that isn’t included here? Let us know! In the meantime, keep your nose to the grindstone, keep your chin up, and keep practicing those idioms. And, if you want to learn more idioms, you might want to check out: Do you want to learn how to speak English like a native speaker?Well if you really want to gain fluency, you are going to have to build up the number of idiomatic expressions that you understand and know how to use.Idiomatic expressions are basically phrases where the meaning of the entire phrase doesn’t necessarily perfectly match the meanings of the words that make up the phrase. Confused? Well, if you want to learn more, you can check out this post of 20 idioms in English with their meanings and sentence examples.Want to learn more? We’ve compiled a list here of 100 idiomatic expressions and their meanings.1. At a crossroads – Needing to make an important decisionWhen you are at a crossroads, you are at a point in your life where you need to make a decision. The implication is that the decision you make will have big, life-altering consequences.2. Bad apple – Bad personYou can use this idiom to describe someone who is not nice and maybe even criminal.3. Barking up the wrong tree – Pursuing the wrong courseWhen you “bark up the wrong tree” you are pursuing the wrong solution to your problems.4. Be closefisted – StingyIf you are being “closefisted”, you don’t want to spend a lot of money.5. Be cold-hearted – UncaringIf you decide to be “cold-hearted”, you are making a deliberate decision not to care about someone or something.6. Be on solid ground – ConfidentWhen you are “on solid ground”, you are confident in your position or feel that you are safe.7. Beat around the bush – Avoid sayingWhen you do this, you are taking a long time to say what you really need to say. You may be doing this because the “truth” is embarrassing or your unsure about how the listener will take it.8. Behind you – SupportiveWhen you are “behind” someone, you are saying that they have your support.9. Between a rock and a hard place – Facing difficultiesWhen you have to choose between two options, neither of which are ideal or “good”. 10. Blow off steam – Try to relaxWhen you are stressed or upset about something, sometimes you need to do something to keep you from thinking about it. 11. Born with a silver spoon in their mouth – Born wealthyThis idiomatic expression is used to describe someone who was born into a wealthy family.12. Break the bank – Spend a lotWhen you “break the bank”, you spend a lot of money on something. If something will “break the bank”, then it’s expensive.13. Bright spark – SmartA “bright spark” is someone who is smart and valuable to an organization.14. Build a case – Argue your pointWhen you “build a case” for something, you are preparing to argue a point or convince someone that your opinion is the right one. 15. Build castles in the sky – DaydreamWhen you fantasize about something you hope to have or achieve.16. Burn your bridges – End a relationshipWhen you “burn your bridges” you end a relationship permanently. 17. Butter up – FlatterWhen you “butter” someone up, you are telling them nice things about themselves.18. Bought a lemon – Bad bargainIf something you bought is a “lemon” it is a bad product. In a sense, you wasted your money on it.19. Break the ice – Start a conversationWhen you start a conversation with a strangers with the end goal of making new friends.20. Calm before the storm – PeacefulWhen you use this to describe your state of being or mind, you’re talking about a quiet period before anticipated trouble comes your way. 21. Chasing rainbows – Pursuing dreamsWhen you try to follow your dreams. The implication here, however, is that you might be better off forgetting your dreams.22. Clear as mud – Hard to understandWhen you are confused about something or a situation.23. Cool as a cucumber – CalmThis idiomatic expression is meant to describe someone who is calm and relaxed. 24. Couch potato – LazyA couch potato is a lazy person. Specifically, someone who sprawls on their couch watching TV almost all day.25. Cross that bridge when we get to it – Think about it laterWhen you say this, you are telling someone that you will think about something later. The implication is that it’s a problem or a decision that can be put off for now.26. Chew it over – Think had about somethingThis idiom implies that you need to make an important decision and can’t afford to be hasty about it.27. Come to light – Be revealedWhen something “comes to light” something that was originally concealed from you is revealed.28. Cut back on – ReduceWhen you use this idiom, you are reducing something.29. Cut to the chase – Speak conciselyWhen you tell someone to “cut to the chase”, you are expressing impatience. This is usually used when someone feels someone else is taking to long to deliver important news.30. Crystal clear – Easy to understandWhen you say that something is “crystal clear”, you are saying that it is understood.31. Dead-end job – No more opportunitiesWhen you are stuck in a “dead-end job”, you are in a career situation where there is no more room for advancement.32. Dig deep – StriveWhen you “dig deep” you put a lot of effort into a task.33. Digging into – Looking closerWhen you “dig into” something, you are looking for more information.34. Don’t run before you can walk – Don’t assume something is easyThis is a descriptive idiom, it’s meant to make you think about how a baby needs to learn how to walk before they can run. It’s supposed to caution you about assuming you can just do something without learning the basics.35. Down to earth – PracticalThis describes someone who is known for being sensible and practical.36. Eat like a bird – Small appetiteThis is used to describe someone who doesn’t eat a lot.37. Eat like a horse – Eat a lotIf you eat like a horse, you are eating a lot. You can “eat like a bird” most of the time but “eat like a horse” at a specific time because you are either very hungry or you really like the food.38. Eat your words – Admit you were wrongWhen you “eat your words” you are admitting that something you said earlier turned out to be wrong.39. Every cloud has a silver lining – Things will get betterWhen you say this, you are telling yourself or someone else that you will get through your troubles.40. Face the music – Face the consequencesWhen you “face the music”, you are owning up to a mistake and trying to make amends.41. Find your feet – AdaptWhen you are “finding your feet” you are learning how to adapt to a new situation, like a new job. 42. Follow in their footsteps – ImitateThis idiom is often used between children and their parents, but it can also refer to a mentor or someone you admire. If you “follow in someone’s footsteps”, you do the same thing that they did.43. Food for thought – Something to think aboutIf you are given “food for thought” you have been given something to think about.44. A frosty reception – To be unwelcomeIf you received a “frosty reception”, you are not welcome. 45. Fly off the handle – RagesYou can use this idiom to describe someone who is visibly angry over a situation. Often this means that someone is shouting and maybe gesturing violently and even causing damage to property. It also implies that the angry reaction is disproportionate to the situation. 46. Get on with your life – Continue on after a setbackThis is something you can say and should do after going through some problems. 47. Give them a run for their money – CompeteIf you are competing with someone, you are giving them a “run for their money.”48. Go Dutch – Split the billYou can use this idiomatic expression when dining out with friends. 49. Go with the flow – Relax and get alongWhen you “go with the flow” you keep calm and just go along with whatever is happening around you.50. Got off scot-free – EscapedWhen you “get off scot-free”, you managed to escape any consequences for your actions.51. Hard to swallow – UnbelievableIf someone told you something that you just can’t believe, they told you something that is “hard to swallow”.52. Have your whole life in front of you – Young Someone who has their whole life in front of them is young and full of promise.53. Hold out an olive branch – ApologizeWhen you do this, you try to make amends or peace with someone you’ve hurt or angered.54. In hot water – In troubleThis idiomatic expression can be used to say that you are in a less than ideal situation.55. Inching forward - Making slow progressWhen you say this, you’re saying things are proceeding slowly. 56. Keep on the straight and narrow – Keep out of troubleWhen you say this, you are implying that you are going to live in a morally correct way. 57. Keep your chin up – Stay positiveEven if you’re going through a hard time, you should keep thinking positive. 58. Kicked the bucket – DiedThis is an irreverent phrase to say that someone has died. Be careful how you use it.59. Let the cat out of the bag – Spoiled the secretYou “let the cat out of the bag” when you accidentally let someone in on a secret that they weren’t meant to know.60. Look up to – RespectWhen you “look up to” someone you are acknowledging that you respect them and value their opinion.61. Loaded – RichWhen you call someone “loaded” you are saying that they are rich. 62. Lost at sea – ConfusedIf a situation is making you feel confused or lost, this is the idiom to use.63. Making ends meet – Careful budgetingIf you. don’t have much money, you need to “make ends meet”. This means you carefully budget what you do have to meet your needs.64. Make a mountain out of a molehill –ExaggerateThis idiom is used to say that someone is being over-dramatic with their complaints or concerns.65. Make waves – Change thingsWhen you “make waves”, you change a situation dramatically. This can also mean that you caused trouble.66. Nip in the bud – StopWhen you do this, you take action to keep a situation from getting worse.67. No sweat – EasyWhen you say “no sweat” you are saying that a task was easy68. Not your cup of tea – Not something you likeIf you say that something is “not your cup of tea” you are saying it’s not something you particularly like or enjoy.69. Once in a blue moon – RareThis implies something that either won’t happen or rarely happens.70. Out in the open – Public knowledgeWhen something is “out in the open”, it is a matter of public knowledge.71. Over the moon – Very happyYou can use this to describe the feeling of getting something you’ve been looking forward to for a long time.72. On cloud nine – Very happySimilar to being over the moon.73. Packed like sardines – CrowdedIf people are “packed like sardines” in a venue, they are standing very close together in a small space.74. Piece of cake –EasyIf you say something is a “piece of cake” you are saying that it is easy.75. Pitch in - ContributeWhen you “pitch-in”, you work with a group of people to reach a common goal.76. Point of view – An opinionYour “point of view” is what you think about someone or a situation. 77. Pony up – PayIf you are paying back a debt, you are “ponying up” the money.78. Pour oil on troubled waters – Calm things downThis basically means that you played peacemaker and kept an argument from developing into a physical fight.79. Put your head in the sand – Deny something unpleasantWhen you have your “head in the sand”, you are deliberately ignoring a bad situation.80. Rags to riches – Became richSomeone who went from “rags to riches” was born poor or underprivileged, but is now in a better social position.81. Rain or shine – No matter whatThis idiomatic expression is used to express the idea that nothing will stop you. 82. Reap the rewards – Received the benefitsWhen you “reap the rewards”, you are getting the benefits of your good work.83. Rings a bell – Sounds familiarWhen you think that you’ve heard a piece of information before but are not so sure.84. Rule of thumb – General practiceA “rule of thumb” is an unwritten rule that is followed by the majority.85. Separate the wheat from the chaff – Decide what is valuableThis picturesque idiom refers to how, when you harvest wheat, you need to separate it from the stalks and leaves. So, it means that you pick out or choose what is valuable to keep.86. Shell out money – PayWhen you “shell out money”, you pay for an item.87. Sitting on the fence – NeutralWhen you “sit on the fence” you are avoiding making a decision. Often, this is a decision between two people with different opinions.88. Smart cookie – Smart personYou can use this idiom to describe someone intelligent.89. Spice things up – Make things interestingWhen you “spice things up” you do something to break out of your normal routine.90. Spill the beans – TellWhen you do this, you tell someone something they didn’t know. It may or not have been a secret previously.91. Sticky fingers – ThiefIf you accuse someone of having “sticky fingers” you are basically calling them a thief.92. Take a side – Choose who to supportWhen you “take a side” in an argument, you are agreeing with one of those arguing.93. Throw light on – Explain somethingWhen you “throw light on” a situation, you help make sure that it is understood.94. To move at a snail’s pace – Move slowlyThis is another idiomatic phrase that’s meant to paint a picture. A snail moves slowly, so to move at its pace means things are going slowly.95. Tread carefully – Be cautiousThis implies that a situation is fraught and it might be easy to offend those involved.96. Under the table – SecretiveWhen you do something “under the table”, you are trying to do something so that only a small amount of people are aware of it. It’s commonly used to describe something that is possibly unscrupulous. For example, bribes are given “under the table”.97. Undermine your position – Act unconvincinglyWhen you behave in a way that makes you and your opinion seem untrustworthy.98. Up in the air – UncertainWhen you say something is “up in the air”, you are saying that you are not sure that an event is happening.99. Weather the storm – SurviveWhen you “weather the storm”, you endure a bad situation.100. When it rains, it pours – Trouble comesThis refers to the fact that sometimes, many bad things happen to people at one time.So there you have it, 100 idiomatic expressions and their meanings. These idioms are used by native English language speakers to add some color to their daily speech.If you’re interested in improving your English, consider these excellent online learning resources: Kick off your journey with Babbel, offering user-friendly, engaging lessons tailored to fit seamlessly into your daily schedule. If you want something more in-depth, there's a great English course on Coursera that covers everything from the basics to more advanced topics. For a more personalized learning experience, connect with native English tutors on Preply, enhancing your speaking and comprehension skills. Take advantage of a 50% discount on your first Preply session by using this link. Let’s learn idioms + examples of how they are used! Here are 100 common English idioms with meanings and example sentences: Download this lesson 1. A blessing in disguise Meaning: Something that seems bad or unlucky at first but turns out to be good. Example: Losing that job was a blessing in disguise because it pushed me to start my own business. Meaning: Very common and easy to find. Example: Those souvenir keychains are a dime a dozen at the tourist shops. “Those souvenir keychains are a dime a dozen.” = very common Meaning: Fully listening and paying attention. Example: Go ahead, I’m all ears. Tell me what’s been on your mind. Meaning: In the same situation or predicament. Example: Everybody on staff got a pay cut – we’re all in the same boat. Meaning: Accusing or blaming the wrong person. Example: If you think I took your book, you’re barking up the wrong tree. I haven’t seen it. Meaning: Avoiding the main topic or being indirect. Example: Stop beating around the bush and tell me why you didn’t show up to my birthday party. Meaning: To face a difficult or unpleasant situation bravely. Example: I have to bite the bullet and tell him the truth, even though it might hurt him. Meaning: To reconcile or make peace after a conflict. Example: After years of not speaking to each other, they finally decided to bury the hatchet and become friends again. After years of not speaking, they finally decided to bury the hatchet. Meaning: Just barely or narrowly escaping a difficult situation. Example: I passed the exam by the skin of my teeth; I got the minimum required score. Meaning: To stop working or to end an activity. Example: We’ve been painting all afternoon; let’s call it a day and continue tomorrow. Meaning: Feeling nervous or hesitant about doing something. Example: I was going to ask her out, but I got cold feet at the last moment. “I was going to ask her out, but I got cold feet.” = got nervous and didn’t do it Meaning: To be very expensive. Example: That luxury car must have cost him an arm and a leg. Meaning: To worry or complain about something that has already happened and cannot be changed. Example: Yes, we made a mistake, but there’s no use crying over spilled milk. Let’s focus on finding a solution. Meaning: To do something quickly or take shortcuts, often sacrificing quality. Example: Don’t cut corners on this project; it needs to be excellent to impress the new client. Meaning: To irritate or annoy someone greatly. Example: Her constant humming drives me up the wall; I can’t concentrate with that noise. Meaning: something positive in a difficult situation. Example: Losing my job was tough, but the silver lining was that I found a new career opportunity. Meaning: To confront the consequences of one’s actions. Example: You made a mistake, and now you have to face the music and accept the criticism. Meaning: Experience the same negative treatment you have given to others. Example: After constantly making fun of others, he finally got a taste of his own medicine when they started teasing him. Meaning: To start a process or activity. Example: Let’s get the ball rolling on this project and assign tasks to the team members. “get the ball rolling” = start a process Meaning: To believe someone’s statement or excuse without being too suspicious. Example: I don’t have any evidence, but I’ll give him the benefit of the doubt and trust his explanation. Meaning: To put in extra effort or do more than what is expected. Example: If you want to succeed in this competitive industry, you need to go the extra mile. Meaning: To identify or describe something accurately. Example: She hit the nail on the head when she said that our team needs better communication. “hit the nail on the head” = say something exactly right Meaning: In a moment of intense emotion, when we act or speak impulsively without thinking. Example: I didn’t mean to say those hurtful words; I said them in the heat of the moment. Meaning: Something is very easy or simple to do. Example: Don’t worry about the test; it’s a piece of cake. You’ll do fine. Meaning: To remain positive and optimistic during difficult times. Example: Even though he faced many rejections, he kept his chin up and continued to pursue his dream. “keep your chin up” = stay positive even in a difficult situation Meaning: Accomplish two things at the same time with a single action. Example: By taking the train instead of driving, she kills two birds with one stone – saves money and helps the environment. Meaning: To reveal a secret or confidential information. Example: She accidentally let the cat out of the bag and spoiled the surprise party. Meaning: Feeling uncomfortable or out of place in a particular situation. Example: As a city person, I feel like a fish out of water when I visit rural areas. Meaning: To give a brief summary or conclusion. Example: He rambled on about his trip, but to make a long story short, he had an amazing time. Meaning: To miss an opportunity or chance. Example: I didn’t apply for the scholarship on time, so I missed the boat. Meaning: Something that is not to your liking or preference. Example: I tried skiing, but it’s not my cup of tea – I don’t enjoy the cold. It’s not my cup of tea = I don’t like it Meaning: Feeling extremely happy or joyful. Example: When she got the job offer, she was on cloud nine; it was her dream job. Meaning: Happens very rarely. Example: We eat at home most of the time; we go to restaurants once in a blue moon – for special occasions. Meaning: Unexpectedly or without any warning. Example: I hadn’t spoken to her in years, and then out of the blue, she called me yesterday. Meaning: Delighted or extremely happy. Example: She was over the moon when she received her acceptance letter from the university. Over the moon = extremely happy Meaning: To tease or joke with someone. Example: He’s just pulling your leg; he doesn’t really mean what he said. Meaning: Doing things in the wrong order. Example: You’re putting the cart before the horse by buying furniture before finding a place to live. Meaning: Raining heavily. Example: We can’t go outside; it’s raining cats and dogs. Raining cats and dogs = raining very heavily Meaning: Not sound familiar or trigger a vague memory. Example: I don’t think I know him – his name doesn’t ring a bell. Meaning: A general principle or guideline. Example: As a rule of thumb, it’s better to arrive early for meetings. Meaning: To do something that harms oneself unintentionally. Example: He shot himself in the foot by quitting his job without having another one lined up. Meaning: To remain neutral or undecided in a dispute or issue. Example: I can’t decide which car to buy, so I’m on the fence for now. Sitting on the fence = undecided Meaning: Hidden or embarrassing secrets from the past. Example: The journalist investigated the famous singer, trying to find some skeletons in the closet. Meaning: To postpone or reschedule a plan or invitation. Example: I’m sorry, I can’t make it to the concert tonight. Can I take a rain check? Meaning: It’s your turn to take action or make a decision. Example: I’ve given you all the information; now the ball is in your court. Meaning: Enjoying the benefits of two different things at the same time. Example: Working part-time allows me to have a career and spend time with my family. It’s the best of both worlds. Meaning: teach someone the details of a task or procedure During my first week on the job, my co-workers showed me the ropes. Meaning: Everything, or the full extent of something. Example: I’ll make sure you have everything you need—equipment, resources, the whole nine yards. Meaning: Supporting or being loyal to someone during good times and bad times. Example: We’ve been friends for over 20 years, through thick and thin. Meaning: To give up or surrender. Example: After struggling with the homework for hours, he finally threw in the towel. Download this lesson Meaning: To ignore or pretend not to notice something. Example: The teacher turned a blind eye to the students whispering during the exam. Meaning: Feeling sick. Example: I won’t be able to come to work today; I’m feeling under the weather. Under the weather = Feeling sick Meaning: Freed from an obligation Example: I was going to give a class

on Saturday, but they found another teacher to do it, so I'm off the hook. Meaning: Uncertain or not confirmed. Example: The date for the meeting is still up in the air; we need to schedule it. Meaning: Bad things often happen in clusters or all at once. Example: First, my car broke down, then I lost my wallet. When it rains, it pours! Meaning: To understand or comprehend something complex or difficult. Example: It took me a while to wrap my head around the new software, but now I understand how to use it. Meaning: Distract, confuse, or surprise someone suddenly. Example: I think I answered all the questions in the job interview pretty well – except for the random one about my personal life. I wasn't expecting it, so it threw me for a loop. Meaning: Immediately or without hesitation. Example: He's always ready to help at the drop of a hat. At the drop of a hat = immediately Meaning: Completely annoyed, exhausted, or desperate, with no more patience or energy. Example: After dealing with two disobedient kids all day, I was at the end of my rope. Meaning: Be quiet! Example: Hey kids, pipe down! This is a library and people are trying to study. Meaning: To deal with a problem or worry about something when it actually happens. Example: I'm not sure what to do if I fail the test, but I'll cross that bridge when I come to it. Meaning: To make a mistake or fail to do something properly. Example: He dropped the ball by forgetting to send the important email on time. Meaning: An obvious problem or issue that no one wants to address. Example: We need to talk about the budget cuts; it's the elephant in the room. Meaning: To start a relationship or situation poorly or with a misunderstanding. Example: We got off on the wrong foot, but we can still work things out and improve our communication. Meaning: To fail spectacularly or experience a significant defeat or failure. Example: Their new product launch went down in flames, and they lost a lot of money. Go down in flames = Fail spectacularly Meaning: To adapt to a situation or accept things as they come. Example: I don't have a specific plan for the weekend; I'll just go with the flow and see what happens. Meaning: To persevere or keep going despite difficulties or challenges. Example: I know it's tough, but hang in there; things will get better. Meaning: In trouble or facing difficulties due to a mistake or wrongdoing. Example: He found himself in hot water after missing an important deadline. Meaning: To join or support something that is currently popular or successful. Example: Everyone is using that new social media platform, so I decided to jump on the bandwagon. Meaning: Die (very informal) Example: I'd love to visit Jamaica someday before I kick the bucket. Kick the bucket = die (very informal/casual) Meaning: To believe something completely – usually something that is not true. Example: When I got back late from the party, I told my mom I had been studying for a final exam at a friend's house. She swallowed it hook, line, and sinker. Meaning: Reveal the true nature of your character Example: When things get stressful, that's when people start to show their true colors Meaning: In a dangerous situation. Example: He's on thin ice with his boss after making multiple mistakes. Meaning: To decide or act based on the situation as it develops, rather than having a fixed plan. Example: We don't have a specific itinerary; we'll just play it by ear and see what we feel like doing. Meaning: To stop wasting your time and effort saying things that won't have any effect. Example: Trying to convince him to change his mind is pointless; save your breath. Meaning: To attract the most attention or praise. Example: Her performance was incredible; she stole the show with her singing and dancing. Meaning: To receive/consider information with skepticism or doubt. Example: I heard a rumor, but I took it with a grain of salt until I had more information. Take it with a grain of salt = Not completely believe it Meaning: information or communication is NOT clear at all. Example: My friend tried to explain how to get to his house, but his directions were as clear as mud and we got lost. Meaning: Do something too early, before the appropriate time Example: She jumped the gun and announced the winner before the final results were officially declared. Meaning: Have a miscommunication Example: We must have gotten our wires crossed – I wanted you to come at 7 PM, not 7 AM. Get your wires crossed = Have a miscommunication or misunderstanding Meaning: To take a risk or act without considering the potential consequences. Example: Despite her friends' warnings, she decided to throw caution to the wind and quit her job to pursue her passion. Meaning: To lose the skill or ability that one once had. Example: After years of not playing the piano, he realized he had lost his touch and struggled to play a simple melody. Meaning: Refers to something that is exciting, exceptional, or out of control. Example: The concert last night was off the chain! The energy in the crowd was unbelievable. Meaning: To estimate or measure something by using one's judgment or visual assessment. Example: We didn't have a ruler, so we had to eyeball the length of the table and hope it would fit in the room. Meaning: To add excitement or variety to a situation or relationship. Example: Let's try a new restaurant tonight to spice things up. Meaning: To earn a living or provide financial support for one's family. Example: She works two jobs to bring home the bacon and support her children. Bring home the bacon = Earn money to support a family Meaning: To stop or prevent a problem or situation from developing further. Example: My 5-year-old started telling lies; we had to discipline her to nip that habit in the bud. Meaning: The final event or action that makes a situation unbearable or prompts a strong reaction. Example: When he forgot their anniversary, it was the last straw for her, and she decided to end the relationship. Meaning: A completely different situation or set of circumstances. Example: We had to change our lifestyle after we had kids – it was a whole new ballgame. Meaning: To work or study late into the night. Example: I'm exhausted because I was burning the midnight oil yesterday. Burn the midnight oil = Stay up very late, usually working or studying Meaning: Trapped in a difficult or impossible situation, having to choose between two unfavorable options. Example: She was between a rock and a hard place when both job offers required her to relocate. Meaning: Argue an opposing perspective in order to generate critical thinking or debate. Example: I know everyone's in favor of this plan, but let me play devil's advocate – what will we do if it all goes wrong? Meaning: To say something embarrassing, inappropriate, or offensive by accident. Example: I put my foot in my mouth when I asked her if she was pregnant, but she wasn't. Meaning: To regain control over one's emotions or behavior. Example: He needs to get a grip and stop letting his anger affect his relationships. Meaning: Used to describe someone who is difficult, eccentric, or challenging to deal with. Example: I love my cousin, but she's a real piece of work – she gets offended over the slightest things. Meaning: To ask someone a difficult question or request an immediate response, often in a public or challenging situation. Example: During the meeting, the boss put him on the spot by asking him to present his idea without any preparation. Put someone on the spot = ask someone a difficult question in front of others Meaning: Someone who likes to stay up late. Example: My son's a night owl – he never goes to bed before 2 AM. Meaning: Something is old and in not-so-great condition. Example: I've had this car for over fifteen years… it's seen better days. Meaning: Become angry, upset or offended, especially about something which in your opinion doesn't justify such a reaction. Example: My roommate is a neat freak, and he gets bent out of shape if I leave a single spoon on the kitchen counter. Meaning: Use your resources in a way that leads to success. Example: Your supervisor really likes you. If you play your cards right, you could get promoted soon. Now you know 100 common idiomatic expressions and their meanings. I hope these idioms + examples are helpful! Learn more: List of idioms with their definitions Download this lesson You'll learn lots more idioms & examples in my 300+ Idioms Course! This course is an EFFECTIVE way to learn and practice common idiomatic expressions in the English language. It's not just a list of idioms – instead, each lesson helps you learn the expressions more actively. The lessons start by showing you examples of idioms in sentences, and you'll try to guess what they mean from the context. Then, you can watch a video where I teach the idioms' meanings. Next, try a quiz to see how well you remember the idiomatic expressions. Finally, there are short-answer questions to help you practice using these common idioms yourself – and you can get feedback and correction from an Espresso English teacher! Home » English Expressions » Idioms Idioms are an integral part of any language, and English is no exception. These phrases, which cannot be understood literally, add color and nuance to our communication and often have a cultural or historical significance. In this reference, we will look at a list of 100 popular idioms in English, along with example sentences showing how they are used in context. What Is An Idiom? An idiom is a common word or phrase which means something different from its literal meaning but can be understood because of their popular use. Idioms are not the same thing as slang. Idioms are made of normal words that have a special meaning known to almost everyone. Slang is usually special words or special meanings of normal words that are known only to a particular group of people. Take some examples of idioms to understand more what it is. "Break a leg" – This is a way to wish someone good luck. "To shed crocodile tears" means to cry about something but without actually caring or another example is "It's raining cats and dogs" means it's raining heavily. English Idioms List List of Idioms in English – Created by Englishstudyonline Idiom List from A-C A blessing in disguise: Seems bad, but is actually good A cat has nine lives: Cats seem to get away with dangerous things A cat nap: A short sleep during the day A chip on your shoulder: A tendency to be easily annoyed or angered, especially over petty issues. A clean slate: A new beginning, with no mistakes or errors. A closed book: To be difficult to know or understand A dark horse: Someone who is not well known but has the potential to be successful. A dime a dozen: Something that is very common or easy to find. A drop in the bucket: A very small or unimportant amount. A feather in your cap: An achievement or accomplishment that is a source of pride. A fish out of water: Someone who is in a situation where they are not comfortable or competent. A flash in the pan: Something that is briefly successful but does not last. A foot in the door: An initial advantage or opportunity that can lead to something more. A gem of a person: Someone who is valuable or precious. A handful: Someone or something that is difficult to manage or control. A leopard can't change its spots: People cannot change their basic nature. A penny saved is a penny earned: You will save money by being careful about how much you spend A piece of cake: Easy A scaredy-cat: Someone who is excessively scared or afraid. A sight for sore eyes: Something or someone that is very welcome or pleasing to see. A taste of your own medicine: To experience the same thing that you have done to others. Ace in the hole: A secret advantage or resource that can be used in a pinch. Ace up your sleeve: A secret advantage or resource that can be used when needed. Add fuel to the fire: To make a situation worse or more intense. Add insult to injury: To make a bad situation worse by saying or doing something hurtful or thoughtless. Against all odds: Despite difficulties or challenges. Against the clock: Working as fast as possible to meet a deadline. Ahead of the curve: Ahead of others in terms of knowledge or progress. Air rage: Angry behavior inside an airplane Air your dirty laundry: To publicly reveal or discuss private or embarrassing information about someone or something. Alive and kicking: Still alive and active. All bark and no bite: Someone who talks a lot but doesn't actually do anything. All bets are off: The rules or expectations are no longer in place. All ears: Listening attentively. All in a day's work: Something that is routine or expected. All in a tizzy: Confused or agitated.) All of a sudden: Suddenly, without warning. All systems go: Everything is ready to start. All thumbs: Clumsy, awkward. An arm and a leg: Something that is very expensive. An eye for an eye: The idea that when someone does something wrong to you, you should do something wrong to them in return. Apple of my eye: Someone who is very dear to you. As easy as pie: Something that is very easy to do. As fit as a fiddle: To be healthy and physically fit At the drop of a hat: Without hesitation, immediately. Back to square one: starting something over from the beginning Baker's dozen: 13 of something Ball is in your court: it is your turn to take action or make a decision Barking up the wrong tree: pursuing the wrong course of action Barrel of laugh: Someone who is very funny Beating around the bush: Not discussing what is important/ procrastinating Bend over backwards: make a lot of effort Bent out of shape: To feel upset or annoyed about something Big task on your hand: Having something important to finish Bite off more than you can chew: take on more than you can handle Bite the bullet: to face something difficult or unpleasant Blow one's stack: To lose one's temper and explode in anger Break a leg: Good luck Bring home the bacon: provide for one's family financially Bull in a china shop: someone who is clumsy or careless and causes damage or destruction Burn the midnight oil: work late into the night Butter someone up: flatter someone in order to get something from them Buy a lemon: To buy something that doesn't work well (usually refers to care) Buy a pig in a poke: purchase something without knowing all the details or facts By the skin of your teeth: barely, narrowly Cakewalk: something that is very easy Calm before the storm: a period of quiet or tranquility before a difficult or tumultuous event Can't stand (something): To dislike something Cast pearls before swine: offer something valuable to someone who does not appreciate it Cat on a hot in roof: Be extremely nervous Cat out of the bag: reveal a secret Chalk up: attribute to Change your tune: Change your opinion about something or someone Chase rainbows: pursue something that is unattainable Cheap as dirt: very inexpensive Chicken out: to back out of something due to fear or lack of courage Chip on your shoulder: a tendency to be angry or resentful over something Chuck a wobbly: To act in an emotional way Clean bill of health: A report or certificate that a person or animal is healthy Close but no cigar: Close but failed at the end Cold shoulder: to ignore or reject someone Cook the books: To change accounts and figures dishonestly, usually to get money Cool as a cucumber: Very calm, not nervous Cool cat: Someone who has the respect of their peers in a young, casual way Couch potato: Someone who lies around and barely moves Cream of the crop: The best of a group of similar things or people Crocodile tears: Fake tears or false sadness Cry crocodile tears: to feign sadness or remorse Cry foul: to protest or complain about something being unfair Cry havoc and let slip the dogs of war: a quote from Shakespeare's play "Julius Caesar," meaning to create chaos and start a war Cry havoc: create chaos or confusion Cry one's eyes out: Cry a lot and for a long time Cry over spilt milk: Complain about something that cannot be changed Cry uncle: give up, admit defeat Cry wolf: to raise a false alarm Cry your eyes out: to be extremely sad Curiosity killed the cat: Being too curious can get you into trouble Curry favor: try to gain favor or support from someone Cut and dry: straightforward, no room for debate Cut the mustard: to meet the required standards or expectations Cut to the chase: get to the point Idiom List from D-F Damp squib: a failure or disappointment. Dark horse: a person who is not well-known but has the potential to be successful. Dead in the water: not making progress or not able to be completed. Dead to the world: deeply asleep or unconscious. Devil's advocate: someone who takes a contrary position or argues against a belief or proposition just for the sake of an argument. Diamond in the rough: someone or something with potential or talent that is not yet fully developed or recognized. Die is cast: a decision has been made and cannot be changed. Dim the lights: to reduce the brightness of the lights. Dime a dozen: Very common and no special value; easily available Dinner and a show: an event or outing that combines a meal with entertainment. Dip your toe in the water: to try something new or test the waters before fully committing to it. Dog days of summer: The hottest, most humid days of summer Don't swear it: Don't worry about it Down in the dumps: Depressed, sad Draw a blank: Be unable to remember something Dressed to the nines: Dressed fashionably Drive a hard bargain: To arrange a transaction so that it benefits oneself Drive someone up the wall: Deeply irritate someone Driving me bananas: Making me feel crazy Each to their own: a way of saying that everyone has different opinions and preferences and that is okay. Early bird gets the worm: the person who arrives or takes action early has an advantage. Ears are burning: a feeling that someone is talking about you or that you are the topic of conversation. Easier said than done: Easy to say, but hard to actually do Easy as pie: something that is very easy to do. Eat crow: To have to admit that you made a mistake Eat your heart out: to feel jealous or envious of someone or something. Egg on: to encourage or incite someone to do something. Elbow grease: hard physical work or effort. End of the road: the end or conclusion of something. Even a cat can look at a king/queen: I have every right to do this Every cloud has a silver lining: there is a positive aspect to every negative situation. Everyone's cup of tea: something that is enjoyed by everyone or suitable for everyone. Face like a wet week-end: Look sad and miserable Face the music: to accept the consequences of one's actions. Fair weather friend: a person who is only a friend during good times and not during difficult times. Falling on deaf ears: not being listened to or paid attention to. Fat cat: A negative description of a rich and powerful person Feast or famine: a situation that alternates between having too much of something and having too little of it. Feeling under the weather: not feeling well or sick. Few and far between: not frequent or common. Fiddle while Rome burns: to be indifferent or do something trivial while something important is happening. Fifth wheel: an unnecessary or extra person in a group. Fight like cat and dog: Continually arguing with each other Fit as a fiddle: in good health. Fly by the seat of your pants: to act on impulse or without a plan. Related Eat Your Heart Out Meaning with Interesting Example SentencesIdiom List from G-I Get a leg up: to gain an advantage or opportunity. Get cold feet: to become nervous or hesitant about something. Get out of town: I don't believe you Get over it: Forget about the past Get up on the wrong side of the bed: Someone that is having a horrible day Get your ducks in a row: to get organized or prepared. Get your hands dirty: to do practical or hard work. Give a cold shoulder: to ignore or be unfriendly to someone. Give an inch, take a mile: if someone is allowed to have or do something small, they will take advantage and want more. Go back to the drawing board: to start something again because the previous attempt was not successful. Go out on a limb: to take a risk or do something that may be dangerous. Go under the knife: To have an operation in surgery, often a cosmetic surgery Gone off track: Forgot about your future goal Good things come to those who wait: good things will happen to those who are patient and persistent. Goody two shoes: Someone who tries to be perfect Grab the bull by the horns: to confront a problem or challenge directly. Green thumb: Grow lush without trying Green with envy: Very jealous Hair of the dog: a drink that is supposed to cure a hangover. Hands are tied: unable to do anything to help or change a situation. Hands down: For certain the right answer Hang on a second: Wait for a moment Happy as a clam: very happy or content. Harm's way: in a dangerous or risky situation. Have a bone to pick: to have a disagreement or complaint to discuss with someone. Have an ace up your sleeve: to have a secret advantage or plan. Have stumbled upon: To accidentally discover something Have your head in the clouds: to be unrealistic or not paying attention to the present. Head over heels: very much in love or infatuated. Heart is set on: to really want or desire something. Hit the hay: Go to bed Hit the road: To leave Hold your horses: Wait/ calm down I have butterflies in my stomach: You're either in love or nervous I was knocked on my heels: I was surprised Icing on the cake: something that makes a good situation even better. In a nutshell: in a few words or briefly. In a pickle: in a difficult or awkward situation. In a rut: in a repetitive or boring situation. In hot water: in trouble or in a difficult situation. In the bag: Will definitely happen In the black: to be financially successful or profitable. In the heat of the moment: in the midst of a strong emotion or excitement. In the know: having insider information or being well-informed. In the same boat: in a similar situation or experiencing the same difficulties. Inside scoop: The details Idiom List from J-L Jumping the gun: to do something too soon or before it is appropriate. Jumping out of your skin: to be very surprised or shocked. Just what the doctor ordered: exactly what is needed or wanted. Just between you and me: said when you want to tell someone something privately. Just the ticket: exactly what is needed or wanted. Jekyll and Hyde: a person who has a dual personality, one good and one evil. Join the club: to be in the same situation as someone else. Jumping through hoops: doing a lot of hard work or going through a lot of effort. Jumping on the bandwagon: joining in on something that is popular or fashionable. Just a drop in the bucket: a small amount compared to the whole. Landslide victory: a win by a large margin. Last but not least: used to introduce the final item in a list. Last straw: the final problem or burden that causes someone to break or give up. Laughing all the way to the bank: being very successful or profitable. Laughing on the outside, crying on the inside: pretending to be happy but feeling sad or distressed. Leaps and bounds: making a lot of progress or improvement. Let bygones be bygones: to forget about past conflicts or mistakes and move on. Let the cat out of the bag: to reveal a secret unintentionally. Let your hair down: to relax and have fun. Life is just a bowl of cherries: The life is pleasant and uncomplicated Like a dog with two tails: Extremely happy Idiom List from M-O Mad as a hatter: Mentally ill, psychotic Mad as a hornet: very angry. Make a beeline for: to go straight to a specific place or person. Make a clean breast of it: to confess or admit to something. Make a mountain out of a molehill: to make a small problem seem much bigger than it is. Make a splash: to attract a lot of attention or make an impact. Make hay while the sun shines: to make the most of a good opportunity while it is available. Make the most of: to use something to the fullest advantage. Making ends meet: having just enough money to pay for basic expenses. Meeting of the minds: Strong instinctive agreement on something Miss the boat: to miss an opportunity or not arrive in time. Mum's the word: to keep something a secret. Nail on the head: to be exactly right or accurate. Name in lights: to be very famous or successful. Nature of the beast: an inherent quality that cannot be changed. Narrow escape: barely avoiding a problem or danger. Neck and neck: tied or evenly matched. Neck of the woods: a particular area or location. Needle in a haystack: something that is difficult to find or locate. Nest egg: a sum of money saved for a specific purpose. New blood: new people or fresh ideas. New kid on the block: a newcomer or someone who is not experienced. New lease on life: a new opportunity or a renewed sense of energy and purpose. Next to nothing: almost nothing or a very small amount. Night owl: a person who stays up late and is active at night. Nine lives: to have a lot of luck or be able to survive difficult situations. Nip and tuck: very close or evenly matched. Nip in the bud: to stop something before it becomes a bigger problem. No brainer: an obvious decision or choice. No holds barred: unrestricted or uncontrolled. No love lost: to have no affection or respect for someone. No room to swing a cat: Very small, not big enough No skin off my nose: something that does not affect or concern someone. No stone unturned: to leave no possibility unexplored. Nose to the grindstone: working hard and consistently. Not all it's cracked up to be: not as good as it is claimed to be. Not cut out for: not suited or qualified for something. Not in the same league: not as good or competent as someone else. Not miss a beat: to not miss an opportunity or not show any signs of slowing down. Not my cup of tea: not something that someone enjoys or is interested in. Not playing with a full deck: not being mentally capable or sane. Not the sharpest tool in the shed: not the most intelligent or perceptive person. Not up to snuff: not meeting the required standard or expectations. Not worth the paper it's written on: not worth considering or valuable. Nowhere to be found: not able to be located. No-win situation: a situation where there is no possibility of success. Nutty as a fruit cake: Someone who is a bit crazy Oddball: A weirdo or a strange person Off one's rocker: Crazy, nuts, insane Off the beaten path: in a less traveled or usual place. Off the cuff: without preparation or thought. Off the hook: no longer responsible or accountable for something. Off the record: not meant to be shared or repeated. Off the top of your head: without thinking or hesitation. On cloud nine: Blissfully happy On the ball: Prepared, alert, competent On the fence: Undecided between two choices On the ropes: in a difficult or disadvantaged position. On the same page: in agreement or understanding. On the spot: to be required to do something immediately or to be placed in an embarrassing or difficult situation. On the verge of: close to achieving or experiencing something. On thin ice: in a risky or precarious situation. On your high horse: Superior or arrogant position Once bitten twice shy: Said when you are frightened to do something again because you had an unpleasant experience doing it the first time Once in a blue moon: very rarely or almost never. Out of left field: unexpected or unrelated. Out of sorts: Slightly ill, not feeling well Out of the frying pan and into the fire: moving from one difficult situation to another. Over the hill/ Old as the hill: Someone who is very old Out of pocket: not available or unable to be reached. Out of the woods: out of a difficult or dangerous situation. Over the top: excessive or exaggerated. Oxygen thief: a person who takes up more than their share of resources or attention. Out of the ordinary: unusual or unexpected. Related Tie the Knot: What Does This Popular Idiom Mean?Idiom List from P-R Packed to the rafters: very crowded or full. Paddle one's own canoe: To be able to act independently Paint the town red: to have a wild and fun time. Pass the buck: to avoid responsibility or blame by shifting it to someone else. Pass with flying colors: to succeed or do very well. Passing fancy: A temporary interest or attraction Peanut gallery: a group of people who criticize or offer unwanted advice. Peas in the pod: People who are close Penny pincher: a person who is very thrifty or cheap. Perfect storm: a rare and powerful combination of events or factors. Pie in the sky: Something you hope will happen, but is very likely Piggy bank: a container used to save money. Pile it on: to add or do more than necessary. Pillar of the community: a respected and influential member of a community. Play your cards close to your chest: to keep your plans or intentions secret. Play your cards right: to do something in the most advantageous way. Point with pride: to be proud of something. Poke your nose into: to intrude or interfere in something. Pop the question: to propose marriage. Pull out all the stops: to use all available resources or do everything possible. Pull the plug: to end or cancel something. Pull the wool over someone's eyes: to deceive or mislead someone. Pull your weight: to contribute equally to a group effort. Punch above your weight: to perform or succeed beyond what is expected or typical. Push the envelope: to challenge or test the limits. Put the cart before the horse: To do things out of the proper order Put two and two together: to understand or figure out something from the available information. Put your foot in your mouth: to say something inappropriate or embarrassing. Put your money where your mouth is: to prove your commitment or belief through action. Put your nose to the grindstone: to work hard and consistently. Quick on the draw: able to react quickly or make decisions quickly. Quit cold turkey: to stop something abruptly and completely. Queer the pitch: to ruin or spoil something. Question mark: a person or thing that is uncertain or unknown. Quid pro quo: a favor or advantage given in return for something. Rain cats and dogs: Rain very heavily Rain check: to postpone or reschedule something for a later time. Raise the bar: to set a higher standard or expectation. Red herring: something that distracts or misleads from the main issue. Ride shotgun: to sit in the front passenger seat of a vehicle. Right as rain: in good health or working correctly. Ring a bell: to be familiar or remind someone of something. Rise and shine: to wake up and start the day. Rome wasn't built in a day: a project or task will take time to complete. Rub the wrong way: to annoy or irritate someone. Rule of thumb: a general guideline or principle. Idiom List from S-U Seeing is believing: you need to experience something to truly believe it Sell like hotcakes: to sell quickly or in large quantities Sell oneself short: to underestimate one's own abilities or worth Shake a leg: to hurry up or move quickly Shape up or ship out: to improve one's performance or face being fired Shoot for the moon: to aim for an ambitious goal Shoot the breeze: to have a casual conversation Show one's true colors: to reveal one's true nature or character Sitting on the fence: to remain neutral or indecisive Skin of one's teeth: by a very narrow margin Smart cookie: A person who is very intelligent Smell a rat: to suspect something is wrong Sowing one's wild oats: to engage in youthful misbehavior or recklessness Spill the beans: to reveal a secret Spinning one's wheels: to make no progress Spit it out: Say what you're trying to say Stand on ceremony: to adhere to formal etiquette or protocol Stick in one's craw: to irritate or annoy someone Stick one's nose in: to intrude or interfere where not wanted Stick to one's guns: to remain firm in one's beliefs or actions Still waters run deep: a person who is quiet and unassuming may have hidden depths Straight from the horse's mouth: information received directly from the source Swing for the fences: to make a bold, all-out effort to achieve something Sweating bullets: to be extremely nervous or anxious Swimming against the tide: to act in opposition to the majority or the norm Sweeten the pot: to make an offer more attractive or enticing Take for a ride: to cheat or deceive someone Take it easy: Don't hurry, relax, don't get angry Take it with a grain of salt: to not take something too seriously or to view it with skepticism Take the bull by the horns: to face a problem or challenge head-on Take the cake: to be the best or most impressive of its kind Take the plunge: to take a risk or make a big commitment Take the wind out of one's sails: to dampen or discourage someone's enthusiasm or confidence Talk the talk: to speak confidently or knowledgably about a subject Taste of one's own medicine: to experience something that one has inflicted on others Tears of a clown: to hide one's true emotions behind a facade of cheerfulness The ball is in your court: it's now the other person's turn to act or make a decision The whole nine yards: everything that is possible or needed The writing is on the wall: an indication of an impending event or outcome Third time's the charm: success may be achieved after two previous failures Through the grapevine: The informal spreading, gossip, or rumors Throw in the towel: to give up or quit Throw under the bus: to sacrifice or betray someone for one's own benefit Tie the knot: To get married Tip of the iceberg: only a small portion of something much larger To kill 2 birds with 1 stone: To solve 2 problems at once with 1 action. Toe the line: to conform to a rule or standard Top banana: A boss Touch and go: uncertain or risky Turn over a new leaf: to reform oneself and make a fresh start Under the impression: Believing something, perhaps mistakenly Uncharted territory: a situation or area that is unfamiliar or not well-known. Under the gun: under pressure or in a difficult situation. Under wraps: kept secret or hidden. Up for grabs: available to be taken or won. Up in arms: angry and protesting. Up the ante: to increase the stakes or level of competition. Up to par: meeting the expected or required standards. Uphill battle: a struggle that is difficult to win. Use your head: to think before acting. Related The Big Picture: Definition, Origin and Useful ExamplesIdiom List from V-Z Vanquish the enemy: to defeat or overcome an opponent. Venture into unknown territory: to try something new and uncertain. Venture off the beaten path: to take a different and less-traveled route. Vested interest: a specific stake or involvement in something. Vexed to no end: extremely annoyed or frustrated. Vicious cycle: a pattern of behavior that repeats itself and causes more harm than good. Voice of reason: someone who is rational and provides good advice. Vying for attention: competing for recognition or acknowledgment. Yarn-spinning: tell a tall tale or story that is not true. Yearning for: having a strong desire for something Yellow-bellied: refers to a coward or a person who is afraid to take action. You can't have your cake and eat it too: You can't have it all. if you want something you have to give up something else. You can't make an omelet without breaking eggs: you can't achieve a goal without facing some challenges or sacrifices along the way. You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours: a reciprocal agreement to help or benefit each other. Young at heart: Having a youthful outlook, regardless of age Your heart sinks: Feel very unhappy and despondent You're in hot water: you're in trouble or in a difficult situation You're on thin ice: You are in a dangerous or risky situation You've met your match: you've come across someone who is your equal in terms of skill, ability, or determination. Common Idioms in English – Created by Englishstudyonline Idiom Examples Sentences Here is the list of popular idioms with example sentences to help you understand more the meaning of each idiom. Hit the hay It's late, so I guess I hit the hay. Tie the knot I wish you to tie the knot, a harmonious union lasting a hundred years! A happy newlywed, sweet sweet honey! Eat crow Our neighbor had to eat crow yesterday. Bent out of shape My bicycle wheel has got bent out of shape. Pie in the sky Their plans to set up their own business are just pie in the sky. A bad egg A drop in the bucket This business is just a drop in the bucket of what he owns. Couch potato You are such a couch potato on weekends. To kill two birds with one stone We always emphasize to kill two birds with one stone. When we learn English we must make more use of it. Break a leg I just wanted to drop you a note to say break a leg and all those other theatrical cliches. Spit it out Spit it out! Have you lost your tongue? I have butterflies in my stomach I had butterflies in my stomach as I went to get my exam results. Get up on the wrong side of the bed Did you get up on the wrong side of the bed? A blessing in disguise His illness became a blessing in disguise, when he married his nurse. A piece of cake The exam paper was a piece of cake. Beating around the bush She snapped, blushing, and impatient with his beating around the bush. Easier said than done This is easier said than done in white light but it's well worth trying. Get out of town I just wanted to open the throttle, get out of town and try to recapture some of that Misano magic. Get over it He'll get over it—young people are amazingly resilient. Hands down He smacked his hands down on his knees. Hang on a second Hang on a second—I'll just take off my painting things . Have stumbled upon I felt very privileged to have stumbled upon such a rare sight. Hold your horses Just hold your horses, Bill! Let's think about this for a moment. In the bag He reaches in the bag and starts to throw his bread upon the waters. Under the weather You look a bit under the weather. Through the grapevine I had heard through the grapevine that he was quite critical of what we were doing. On your high horse Don't get on your high horse with me. As cool as a cucumber She looks efficient and as cool as a cucumber. Crocodile tears They weep crocodile tears for the poor, but are basically happy with things as they are. Smart cookie Monroe herself, of course, was a smart cookie, but she knew enough to play dumb. On cloud nine He will be on cloud nine when he gets some complimentary words. Green with envy He was green with envy when he saw my new Jaguar car. Dog days of summer Three dog days of summer, the grass behind the monastery had a large brown. Dressed to the nines The girl is always dressed to the nines. Top banana He lost a good opportunity to become top banana. Oddball He has always been an oddball. Over the hill/ Old as the hill He is over the hill as a professional athlete. Nutty as a fruit cake London is a bit more of a problem, and you may think that I am a trifled confused, or even as nutty as a fruit cake, since it is New York which is colloquially known as " the Big Apple ". Like a dog with two tails The old lady was like a dog with two tails when her son and his wife came home from Australia with the grandchildren she ' s never seen before Your heart sinks It's so loud you can't hear your heart sink. Dime a dozen If only cookbooks by chefs really were a dime a dozen. Change your tune Does this report mean you are changing your tune? As fit as a fiddle The next day, the cat was almost as fit as a fiddle, the vet reported. Clean bill of health Doctors continue to give all the siblings a clean bill of health. Go under the knife The next day, the Winston Cup driver will go under the knife. Green thumb They make a fun crop for the little green thumbs in your family. In the same boat There were a lot of them who were in the same boat. Paddle one's own canoe To paddle one's own canoe doesn't necessarily mean denying any external assistance. Put the cart before the horse You will put the cart before the horse if you emphasize the method at the expense of content. Drive a hard bargain His ability to drive a hard bargain has often brought conflict. Hit the road He hooked up and hit the road again. Fight like cats and dogs As kids, we used to fight like cats and dogs. Fat cat The report criticized boardroom fat cats who award themselves huge pay increases. Curiosity killed the cat Please stop prying into my private life. Remember, curiosity killed the cat. No room to swing a cat This bus is too crowded! I have no room to swing a cat! A cat nap We told the men to go home when the rain slacked off and take a cat nap. Rain cats and dogs In the middle of the picnic, it started to rain cats and dogs, and everybody got soaked. A scaredy-cat I happen to be a scaredy-cat. Cool cat That Jefferson is one cool cat. A cat has nine lives The modern belief that a cat has nine lives comes from this tradition. Meeting of the minds Einstein died before this strange meeting of the minds could take place. Under the impression I was under the impression you didn't get on too well. Out of sorts She's been out of sorts since the birth of her baby. Young at heart Dad might be nearly ninety but he's still young at heart. Take it easy Take it easy. You're no spring chicken yourself, you know. Passing fancy People must always be clothed, and machines are not a passing fancy – they are here to stay. On the ball I was lucky to get a bat on the ball there. On the fence I was just sitting on the fence, waiting to see what happened. Mad as a hatter Some purportedly went insane because of the exposure, leading to the expression "mad as a hatter." Draw a blank They drew a blank in their search for the driver. Down in the dumps We can't have you down in the dumps like this. Air rage Cabin crews are reporting up to nine cases of air rage a week. A closed book I'm afraid physics will always be a closed book to me. Cook the books Fudge the figures; cook the books; falsify the data. An IDIOM is a group of words or a phrase that differs from their literal meaning. Idioms enrich the language.In this post, we present you the top 50 Idioms with their Meanings and Sentences.50 Idioms with their Meanings and SentencesNo.IdiomsMeaningsSentences1.At arm's lengthkeeping a safe distanceShe kept the poisonous snake at arm's length.2.Bag and baggagewith all belongingsShe left the apartment with her bags and baggage.3.Beat about the bushavoid getting to the pointCan you please stop beating about the bush and tell me what happened?4.Bed of roseseasy and comfortable situationLife is never a bed of roses; one must face challenges.5.Bolt from the bluea sudden and unexpected eventThe news of the company's bankruptcy came as a bolt from the blue.6.Build castles in the airindulge in unrealistic dreamsInstead of building castles in the air, let's focus on our goals and work hard to achieve them.7.Call in questiondoubtThe evidence presented calls in question the suspect's alibi.8.Cats and dogsraining very heavilyIt's been raining cats and dogs all day.9.Crocodile tears fake tearsI don't trust her crocodile tears, she's just trying to manipulate us.10.Die in harness die while workingHe died in harness a month before his retirement.11.Dark horserelatively unknownThe political newcomer surprised everyone by winning the election, he was a real dark horse.12.End in smokefail to materializeThe company's plans to expand overseas ended in smoke due to lack of funding.13.Far and awayby far or significantlyShe was far and away the best singer in the competition.14.Fish out of waterunfamiliar situationBeing the only vegetarian at the barbecue, she felt like a fish out of water.15.Flesh and bloodhuman or physical existenceShe was just flesh and blood, and couldn't work 24/7 without getting tired.16.Get by heartto memorize somethingIn order to pass the exam, she had to get the formulas by heart.17.Give one's wordto make a promise or give an assuranceHe gave his word that he would always be there to support her.18.Heart and soulwith all energyShe poured her heart and soul into her performance, impressing the judges.19.In cold blooddone intentionally and without emotionThe murder was committed in cold blood and shocked the community.20.In a nutshellbriefly summarizing something.In a nutshell, the company's profits have been declining for the past year. 21.Jail Birda repeat criminalThe detective recognized the suspect as a jailbird who had been in and out of prison for years.22.Kith and kinnear and dear onesShe prefers to spend time with her kith and kin.23.Kill two birds with one stoneachieve two things in one strokeShe listened to an audiobook while doing house chores, killing two birds with one stone.24.Keep the wolf from the doormanage to survive financiallyHer part-time job helped her keep the wolf from the door.25.Laughing stockobject of amusementHis clumsy dancing made him the laughingstock of the party.26.Lion's sharethe major partThe CEO took the lion's share of the company's profits.27.Long and shortbottom lineThe long and short of the matter is that we need to increase our sales revenue.28.Make both ends meetlive frugallyThey had to make both ends meet after losing their jobs.29.Man of strawan insignificant personThe small-time crook was a man of straw compared to the big-time criminals.30.Nip in the budto stop something at an early stageThe company nipped the security breach in the bud before any sensitive information was compromised.31.Null and voidhaving no legal or binding effectThe contract became null and void when one of the parties breached the terms.32.Off and onintermittently or irregularlyI have been practising yoga off and on for the past year.33.Out of the woodno longer in a difficult or dangerous situationThe patient is out of the woods and is expected to make a full recovery.34.Pros and consthe advantages and disadvantages of a situationBefore making a decision, it's important to weigh the pros and cons of the options.35.Pure and simpleplain and straightforwardHis answer was a lie, pure and simple, and he got caught.36.Red-letter dayspecial occasionWinning the championship was a red-letter day for the team.37.Run into debtaccumulate debtHe kept spending money on unnecessary things and ran into debt.38.Salt of the earthe good and honest personMy grandfather was the salt of the earth, always helping others in need.39.Stone's throwa short distance awayThe grocery store was just a stone's throw from his apartment.40.Three R'selementary educationMany schools in underdeveloped countries focus on teaching the three R's.41.To and froback and forthShe paced to and fro in her office, trying to come up with a solution to the problem.42.To the backbonecompletelyShe is a feminist to the backbone and fights for women's rights.43.Under the thumbto be controlled by someoneShe realized that she was under the thumb of her overbearing boss.44.Under one's nosehappening in front of someone without their knowledgeThe thief stole the purse right under the woman's nose.45.Vexed questiona complex and much-debated issueClimate change remains a vexed question among policymakers.46.Wild goose chasean unsuccessful pursuitSearching for the lost ring in the park proved to be a wild goose chase.47.Widow's miteA small but meaningful contributionThe donation of a single dollar may seem small, but it can be a widow's mite to someone in need.48.With a view towith the intention ofShe enrolled in college with a view to pursuing a career in medicine.49.Yeoman's servicediligent and valuable workThe volunteer organization provided yeoman's service to the community after the natural disaster.50.Zenith of powerthe peak of one's authority or influenceThe president's approval ratings were at the zenith of power after his successful foreign policy initiative.Also, ReadDaily Grammar Test - Attempt Now In this article, we have compiled a list of 119 common English idioms with their meanings and examples of how they can be used in everyday conversation. However, before we get started it's important to understand what idioms are. Idioms are phrases or expressions that convey a figurative meaning that differs from the literal meaning of the words used. The Oxford Learner's Dictionary defines

not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use. ShareAlike — If you remix, transform, or build upon the material, you must distribute your contributions under the same license as the original. No additional restrictions — You may not apply legal terms or technological measures that legally restrict others from doing anything the license permits. You do not have to comply with the license for elements of the material in the public domain or where your use is permitted by an applicable exception or limitation . No warranties are given. The license may not give you all of the permissions necessary for your intended use. For example, other rights such as publicity, privacy, or moral rights may limit how you use the material. In this article, we have compiled a list of 119 common English idioms with their meanings and examples of how they can be used in everyday conversation. However, before we get started it’s important to understand what idioms are. Idioms are phrases or expressions that convey a figurative meaning that differs from the literal meaning of the words used. The Oxford Learner’s Dictionary defines an idiom as “a group of words whose meaning is different from the meanings of the individual words.” For example, “a piece of cake” means something that is very easy. This is completely different to its literal meaning. Such idiomatic expressions are often deeply ingrained in the English language and can be challenging for non-native speakers to understand. However, they are an essential part of English communication, and learning them can help you understand and speak English more fluently. So, whether you are an English learner looking to improve your language skills or a native speaker looking to expand your vocabulary, this list of idioms can help you understand and use these expressions with confidence. From idioms related to personal situations and everyday life to those related to business and sport, this list covers a wide range of expressions that you are likely to encounter in spoken and written English. So, let’s dive in and explore the fascinating world of English idioms with these examples: Meaning: Something you already have is more valuable than something you might get in the future. Example: John already has a job offer, but he is considering waiting for a better one. I think he should take the offer because a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. Meaning: Something that seems bad or unlucky at first but turns out to be good. Example: Losing my job was a blessing in disguise because it gave me the opportunity to start my own business. Meaning: Something that is very common and easy to find. Example: People who claim to be professional photographers are a dime a dozen these days. Meaning: Something that is very easy. Example: This math problem is a piece of cake. I can solve it in no time. Meaning: A way of asking someone what they are thinking. Example: You look deep in thought. A penny for your thoughts? Meaning: A picture can convey more information than words. Example: The infographic was so helpful, I immediately understood the concept. It really proved that a picture is worth a thousand words. Meaning: A situation where something starts small and then grows larger and larger, similar to how a snowball rolling down a hill gathers more snow and becomes larger. Example: The new marketing campaign created a snowball effect, with more and more people becoming interested in our product and spreading the word to others. Meaning: What people do is more important than what they say. Example: He promised to help me move, but he never showed up. Actions speak louder than words. Meaning: To make a bad situation even worse. Example: Not only did they cancel my flight, but they also lost my luggage. That really added insult to injury. Meaning: Paying close attention and listening carefully. Example: I’m all ears. Please tell me your story. Meaning: Being clumsy or awkward with your hands. Example: I’m all thumbs when it comes to knitting. I can’t even make a scarf. Meaning: Something that is very expensive. Example: That sports car costs an arm and a leg. Meaning: Being calm and relaxed, even in a stressful situation. Example: Even though she was giving a speech to a large crowd, she was as cool as a cucumber. Meaning: Doing something immediately without any hesitation. Example: If you need my help, I’ll be there at the drop of a hat. Meaning: Starting over from the beginning. Example: The design didn’t work out, so we had to go back to the drawing board. Meaning: Returning to the beginning, starting over. Example: After weeks of negotiations, the two sides still couldn’t agree on a deal, so they went back to square one. Meaning: Making a mistake, going in the wrong direction. Example: If you think I can help you with your math homework, you’re barking up the wrong tree. I’m terrible at math. Meaning: Avoiding the main topic, not getting to the point. Example: Stop beating around the bush and tell me what you really want. Meaning: Going out of one’s way to help someone or accommodate their needs. Example: The hotel staff bent over backwards to make sure we had everything we needed. Meaning: It’s better to do something late than not at all. Example: I know I’m late, but I still want to wish you a happy birthday. Better late than never, right? Meaning: Doing something difficult or unpleasant because it’s necessary. Example: I hate public speaking, but I’ll have to bite the bullet and give the presentation. Meaning: Good luck! Example: Break a leg on your big audition tomorrow! Meaning: Working late into the night. Example: I have a deadline tomorrow, so I’ll be burning the midnight oil tonight. Meaning: Just barely. Example: I passed the test by the skin of my teeth. I got the minimum passing score. Meaning: A complicated or unpleasant situation that, when opened up, creates additional problems. Example: I don’t want to discuss that topic. It’s a can of worms that we don’t need to open. Meaning: Facing a difficult choice with no good options. Example: I’m caught between a rock and a hard place. If I quit my job, I’ll lose my income, but if I stay, I’ll have to work with a boss who makes my life miserable. Meaning: Holding a grudge or feeling angry or resentful about something. Example: He always has a chip on his shoulder because he thinks he doesn’t get the respect he deserves. Meaning: To come very close to achieving something but not quite make it. Example: He was close but no cigar in the race, he finished in second place. Meaning: Dealing with a problem when it happens, not worrying about it before. Example: I’m not going to worry about the presentation until I have to give it. I’ll cross that bridge when I come to it. Meaning: Worrying about something that can’t be changed. Example: Don’t cry over spilled milk. We can’t do anything about the bad weather, so let’s enjoy our vacation anyway. Meaning: Doing something quickly and without attention to detail, often to save time or money. Example: If you keep cutting corners, you’ll end up with a shoddy product that no one wants to buy. Meaning: Taking the opposite point of view to stimulate a discussion. Example: I’ll play devil’s advocate and argue against your proposal to make sure we’ve considered all the possible consequences. Meaning: To begin or start something with enthusiasm or without hesitation. Example: I know you’re nervous about starting your new job, but you just need to dive in and do your best. Meaning: Don’t assume something will happen before it actually does. Example: I know you’re excited about the job offer, but don’t count your chickens before they hatch. You still have to pass the background check. This is one of many popular chicken expressions in the English language. Meaning: Don’t risk everything on one opportunity or investment. Example: I know you’re confident about this one stock, but don’t put all your eggs in one basket. Diversify your portfolio. Meaning: Don’t discard something good while trying to get rid of something bad. Example: I know you don’t like your job, but don’t throw the baby out with the bathwater. You have great coworkers and a good salary. Meaning: A small or insignificant amount. Example: The $5 donation is appreciated, but it’s just a drop in the bucket compared to what we need to raise. Meaning: To eat a lot or have a very big appetite. Example: James eats like a horse, he can finish an entire pizza by himself. Meaning: There is something positive in every negative situation. Example: Even though I lost my job, every cloud has a silver lining. I have more time to spend with my family. Meaning: Accepting the consequences of one’s actions. Example: You made a mistake, and now you have to face the music. Admit your fault and apologize. Meaning: Feeling uncomfortable or out of place in a new situation. Example: I feel like a fish out of water in this fancy restaurant. I’m used to casual dining. Meaning: Experience the same negative treatment you have given to others. Example: He always criticizes other people, but when I criticized him, he got a taste of his own medicine. Meaning: Start something, initiate action. Example: Let’s get the ball rolling and plan the fundraising event. Meaning: To organize yourself or your thoughts, to start behaving in a more responsible and effective way. Example: You need to get your act together if you want to pass the exam. Start studying regularly and focus on your weak areas. Meaning: Assume the best about someone’s intentions, even if they seem suspicious. Example: I don’t think he stole my phone. I’ll give him the benefit of the doubt and look for it before accusing him. Meaning: Do more than is expected or required. Example: If you want to impress your boss, go the extra mile and finish the project ahead of schedule. Meaning: Hear information through rumors or gossip. Example: I heard on the grapevine that the company is laying off employees next month. Meaning: To achieve a great success or make a significant accomplishment. Example: Sarah hit a home run with her presentation at the conference, and now she’s being promoted to lead the new project. Meaning: Be exactly right, hit the target. Example: She hit the nail on the head when she said that the company needs to focus on its core values in order to grow. Meaning: To begin a journey, especially by car or other road vehicles. Example: It’s getting late, and we need to hit the road if we want to make it to the concert on time. Meaning: To go to bed or to go to sleep. Example: “It’s been a long day, I think I’m going to hit the sack early tonight.” Meaning: In trouble or facing negative consequences. Example: He’s in hot water with his boss because he missed a deadline. Meaning: Happening very quickly or suddenly. Example: The accident happened in the blink of an eye. It was over before we even realized what had happened. Meaning: In the same difficult or challenging situation as someone else. Example: We’re all struggling to make ends meet. We’re in the same boat. Meaning: Start something too early or without proper preparation. Example: Don’t jump the gun and start the project before we have all the necessary resources. Meaning: To stay informed about something, especially if it’s a developing situation or a potential opportunity. It suggests that one should be attentive to any signs or hints of what’s happening around them. Example: John is keeping an ear to the ground about the upcoming job openings in his company so that he can apply as soon as the positions become available. Meaning: Stay positive and hopeful even in difficult circumstances. Example: I know things are tough right now, but keep your chin up. Things will get better. Meaning: To hope for a positive outcome or good luck. Example: Keep your fingers crossed for me, I have a job interview tomorrow. Meaning: Accomplish two tasks at the same time. Example: I’m going to the grocery store and the post office. I’ll kill two birds with one stone and do them both in one trip. Meaning: Reveal a secret or confidential information. Example: He let the cat out of the bag and told everyone about the surprise party. Meaning: A sign of hope or relief after a difficult situation. Example: Even though I’m struggling with this project, I can see the light at the end of the tunnel. The deadline is approaching and soon it will be finished. Meaning: Summarize a story or situation. Example: To make a long story short, I missed my flight and had to stay in a hotel overnight. Meaning: To have enough money to cover basic expenses. Example: She works two jobs to make ends meet and support her family. Meaning: Miss an opportunity or chance. Example: I didn’t apply for the scholarship on time. I missed the boat. Meaning: Referring to a specific area or region. Example: I grew up in the same neck of the woods as that famous actor. Meaning: Something that is not one’s preference or interest. Example: I know he loves action movies, but they’re not my cup of tea. Meaning: Working hard and diligently. Example: She put her nose to the grindstone and worked late every night to finish the project on time. Meaning: To have a successful start. Example: Our new product launch is off to a flyer with more than 10,000 units sold in the first week itself. Meaning: Alert, attentive, and responsive. Example: She’s always on the ball and never misses a deadline. Meaning: Being undecided about something, or not committing to a particular option or decision. Example: “I’m on the fence about whether to go to graduate school or start working right away.” Meaning: Happening very rarely. Example: I only see my old college friends once in a blue moon. Meaning: Happening suddenly and unexpectedly. Example: I hadn’t heard from him in years, and then he called me out of the blue. Meaning: Make decisions as you go along, without a plan. Example: I don’t know what time the concert starts, so I’ll just play it by ear and show up when I can. Meaning: Tease or joke with someone, often by making them believe something that is not true. Example: He said he won the lottery, but I think he’s pulling my leg. Meaning: To celebrate in a big or lavish way, usually by spending a lot of money. Example: My sister’s wedding is coming up, and we decided to push the boat out and host the reception at a fancy hotel. Meaning: Be completely open and honest about something. Example: If we’re going to work together, we need to put all our cards on the table and discuss our expectations. Meaning: Say something embarrassing or inappropriate. Example: I put my foot in my mouth when I accidentally insulted her cooking. Meaning: Understand the hidden or implied meaning of something. Example: I think there’s more going on than what she’s saying. I need to read between the lines. Meaning: Do something quickly and without hesitation, even if it’s painful or difficult. Example: Let’s rip off the band-aid and have the difficult conversation we’ve been avoiding. Meaning: A general guideline or rule based on experience. Example: As a rule of thumb, I always arrive 15 minutes early to appointments. Meaning: Have a casual conversation with someone. Example: Let’s shoot the breeze over coffee and catch up. Meaning: Wait patiently and remain in one place. Example: Sit tight while I go get the car. I’ll be back in a few minutes. Meaning: Reveal a secret or confidential information. Example: He spilled the beans and told everyone about the surprise party. Meaning: Take credit for someone else’s ideas or accomplishments. Example: He was about to announce his new invention, but his competitor stole his thunder by announcing a similar product first. Meaning: Maintain your position or opinion, even in the face of opposition. Example: He stuck to his guns and refused to compromise on his principles. Meaning: To take a risk or gamble on something. It can also mean to make a quick decision without much thought or consideration. Example: After losing his job, Dave decided to take a flyer and start his own business, even though he didn’t have much experience in the industry. Note: In 2017, the AP Stylebook modified its recommended spelling from “flier” to “flyer” for all instances of the word “flyer”, except the expression “to take a flier.” You can read more about if you should use flyer or flier here. Meaning: Postpone a meeting or event to a later time. Example: I’m too busy to go to the concert tonight. Can I take a rain check and go another time? Meaning: To be skeptical or doubtful about something. Example: I heard that John won the lottery, but I’m taking it with a pinch of salt. He’s known for telling tall tales. Meaning: Confront a difficult situation directly and with confidence. Example: We need to take the bull by the horns and address the issue before it gets worse. Meaning: It’s your turn to take action or make a decision. Example: I’ve given you all the information you need. Now the ball is in your court. Meaning: The most important or problematic aspects of something are often hidden or hard to see. Example: The project seems straightforward, but the devil is in the details. We need to be careful with the specifics. Meaning: Being proactive and starting early can lead to success. Example: I always start studying for exams early. The early bird gets the worm, after all. Meaning: An issue or problem that everyone is aware of but no one wants to discuss. Example: The company’s financial troubles are the elephant in the room that no one wants to acknowledge. Meaning: The complete or full extent of something. Example: I want to learn everything there is to know about photography. I want to go the whole nine yards. Meaning: To approach a problem or task in a new and innovative way, using creative and unconventional thinking. Example: In order to stay ahead of the competition, we need to start thinking outside the box and come up with new and creative marketing strategies for our business. Meaning: Time is a valuable resource and should be used wisely to achieve maximum productivity and efficiency. Example: I can’t stay and chat for too long, I have a lot of work to do. You know what they say, time is money. Meaning: Being loyal and supportive, even in difficult or challenging times. Example: We’ve been through thick and thin together, and I know I can always count on you. Meaning: Give up or surrender. Example: I’ve been trying to fix the computer for hours, but I think it’s time to throw in the towel and call a professional. Meaning: Get married. Example: They’re finally tying the knot after dating for years. Meaning: Time passes quickly. Example: It’s hard to believe we’ve been friends for 10 years. Time flies! Meaning: Everyone has their own preferences and opinions. Example: I don’t like spicy food, but to each his own. Meaning: Make a positive change in behavior or attitude. Example: I’ve decided to turn over a new leaf and start exercising regularly. Meaning: Persuade or pressure someone to do something they don’t want to do. Example: I didn’t want to go to the party, but my friends twisted my arm and convinced me to go. Meaning: Feeling ill or unwell. Example: I’m feeling under the weather today. I think I’m coming down with a cold. Meaning: A difficult task or situation that requires a lot of effort and persistence to overcome. Example: Getting a new business off the ground is always an uphill battle, but with a good plan and hard work, it can be done. Meaning: Uncertain or undecided. Example: Our plans for the weekend are still up in the air. We haven’t decided what to do yet. Meaning: In a difficult or hopeless situation. Example: If we don’t find a solution soon, we’ll be up the creek without a paddle. Meaning: Think carefully and make a smart decision. Example: Use your head and think before you act. Meaning: Adapt to the customs and practices of the place you are visiting or living in. Example: Even though I don’t usually eat spicy food, when I’m in Thailand, I do as the Romans do and enjoy the local cuisine. Meaning: A fruitless or pointless search or pursuit. Example: I spent hours looking for my lost keys, but it turned out to be a wild goose chase. Meaning: Easily win or succeed without much effort. Example: She’s so talented that she wins hands down in every competition she enters. Meaning: Someone who appears harmless or friendly but is actually dangerous or deceptive. Example: He seemed like a friendly neighbor, but he turned out to be a wolf in sheep’s clothing when we found out he was stealing from us. Meaning: You can provide someone with an opportunity, but you can’t force them to take advantage of it. Example: I gave him all the information he needed to succeed, but he didn’t take any action. You can lead a horse to water, but you can’t make it drink. Meaning: You can’t have everything you want at the same time. Example: You can’t work full-time and travel the world at the same time. You can’t have your cake and eat it too. Meaning: You shouldn’t judge someone or something based on its appearance. Example: She may seem quiet and reserved, but you can’t judge a book by its cover. She’s actually very outgoing and friendly. Meaning: If you miss an opportunity, you may not get another chance. Example: I wanted to buy tickets for the concert, but I waited too long and now they’re sold out. You snooze, you lose. Meaning: I don’t know the answer to a question. Example: I have no idea when the project will be finished. Your guess is as good as mine. Meaning: A strict policy that does not allow for any exceptions or excuses. Example: Our company has a zero-tolerance policy for harassment in the workplace. Meaning: Keep quiet or don’t speak. Example: When we’re in the meeting with the boss, just zip your lip and let me do the talking. That was a piece of cake, right? Idioms are a great way to add color and flavor to your language, whether you’re a native speaker or learning English as a second language. And while their meanings may not be immediately obvious, you’ll quickly pick them up with practice. So, we hope you enjoyed this list of 119 common English idioms with their meanings and examples. Do you have your own favorite idiom that isn’t included here? Let us know! In the meantime, keep your nose to the grindstone, keep your chin up, and keep practicing those idioms. And, if you want to learn more idioms, you might want to check out: Idioms are phrases where the meaning isn’t exactly what the words say. Instead, they have a special meaning that makes conversations more interesting and expressive. In this post, you’ll find 20 common English idioms along with their meanings and simple example sentences. These idioms are perfect for students, teachers, and English learners who want to understand everyday expressions used in real conversations.Break a legHit the booksUnder the weatherLet the cat out of the bagA piece of cakeOnce in a blue moonSpill the beansThe ball is in your courtBite your tongueRaining cats and dogsCry over spilled milkBlow off steamOn cloud nineBarking up the wrong treePull someone’s legCold feetIn hot waterHead in the cloudsBreak the iceBite off more than you can chewHere is a list of 20 popular English idioms, each with a clear meaning and a simple sentence to help you understand how it’s used in real life.Meaning: Good luck (usually said before a performance)Example: “You’ll do great in your play—break a leg!”Meaning: To start studyingExample: “Exams are coming, so I need to hit the books tonight.”Meaning: Feeling sickExample: “I didn’t go to school today because I was feeling under the weather.”Meaning: To accidentally reveal a secretExample: “You let the cat out of the bag about her surprise party!”Meaning: Something very easyExample: “The quiz was a piece of cake—I finished it in five minutes.”Meaning: Very rarelyExample: “We go to the beach only once in a blue moon.”Meaning: To share a secretExample: “Don’t spill the beans about my birthday gift!”Meaning: It’s your turn to take actionExample: “I’ve done my part—now the ball is in your court.”Meaning: To stop yourself from saying somethingExample: “I wanted to complain, but I bit my tongue and stayed calm.”Meaning: Raining very heavilyExample: “We canceled the game because it was raining cats and dogs.”Meaning: To be upset about something that has already happenedExample: “It’s no use crying over spilled milk. Let’s fix it instead.”Meaning: To release strong emotions by doing something activeExample: “After school, I play soccer to blow off steam.”Meaning: Extremely happyExample: “She was on cloud nine after winning the art contest.”Meaning: Blaming the wrong person or looking in the wrong placeExample: “If you think I took your book, you’re barking up the wrong tree.”Meaning: To joke or tease someoneExample: “I’m just pulling your leg—of course, you look great!”Meaning: Nervousness before doing something importantExample: “I got cold feet before the talent show started.”Meaning: In troubleExample: “He’s in hot water for forgetting his homework again.”Meaning: Daydreaming or not paying attentionExample: “She missed the question because her head was in the clouds.”Meaning: To say or do something to make people feel more comfortable in a new situationExample: “To break the ice, the teacher told a funny story on the first day of school.”Meaning: To take on too muchExample: “He bit off more than he could chew by joining five clubs at once.” 50 Idioms with Meaning! Idioms with meaning Here is the list of 50 useful idioms with their meaning and examples, memorize these useful idioms list to speak more efficiently. 1. Fed up with annoyed or bored She is really fed up with the nursing profession. 2. Feel/take someone’s pulse to count the heartbeats of someone The nurse took her pulse. 3. Few and far between occasional He calls on me a few and far between. 4. Fight shy of to avoid doing something or getting involved in something He fought shy of an open quarrel. 5. Fight to death a fight that ends when someone is killed or something is destroyed We will fight to the death to defend our honor. 6. Fight with one’s back to the wall fight very hard You will have to fight with your back to the wall to win the race. 7. Find fault with to criticize somebody or something, often unfairly She’s always finding fault with the children’s work. 8. First and foremost primarily, first of all The first and foremost task of a teacher is to teach. 9. Flesh and blood used for saying that someone has the same qualities that all people share They now realize that their hero is, after all, only flesh and blood. 10. Flog/ beat a dead horse to waste time on something you know is not going to happen To try to win her love is to flog a dead horse. 11. Fly in the ointment a problem that spoils something or makes it difficult The only fly in the ointment is that I cannot use my house for the party 12. Follow suit to do the same as someone else has just done Our school offered free admission and other schools followed suit. 13. For a rainy day to save something, especially money, for a time when you will need it John Saves money for the rainy days of old age. 14. For good/for good and all permanently, forever Joe finally left Turkey for good. 15. For the sake of in order to help, improve, or please someone or something She sings for the sake of joy. 16. For want of sth because of a lack of sth He could not marry her for want of money. 17. Foul play behavior that is not fair or honest He will use any amount of foul play to get his aim. 18. Freudian slip slip of the tongue, an accidental mistake She made a Freudian slip and revealed all her plans. 19. From scratch without any previous preparation or knowledge She learned English from scratch in six months. 20. From the horse’s mouth from a reliable source They have got it straight from the horse’s mouth that the boss is retiring. A big list of Idioms with Meaning and Examples 21. Get/gain/take/hold have the upper hand control or an advantage over a person or situation Pakistan got the upper hand in the second innings against India 22. Get / Set to work to start doing a piece of work He set to work on his plan. 23. Get on someone’s nerves to annoy someone She keeps on crying it really gets on my nerves. 24. Get rid of to throw away something Let us get rid of these useless old things. 25. Get the better of to defeat someone in a game, argument, etc. Pakistan finally got the better of India in the match. 26. Get to the bottom of something to find out the true cause of a bad situation Try to get to the bottom of the problem to solve it. 27. Get/Have wind of something to find out about something secret How did she get wind of our plan? 28. Gird up one’s loins to prepare for something difficult or dangerous We should gird up our loins to face the problem. 29. Give a false coloring to misinterpret He gave a false coloring to my statement and began to quarrel with me. 30. Give a good account of oneself succeed She gave a good account of herself in the examination. 31. Give and take if there is give and take between people, each person allows the other to get something that they want We can solve the problem by giving and take. 32. Give full/free rein to to allow a feeling to be expressed freely Finally, she gave full rein to her love for John. 33. Give oneself airs, put on airs be proud He is too humble to give herself airs. 34. Give rise to initiate She never gives rise to her feelings. 35. Give somebody a piece of one’s mind to rebuke, to scold The father gave him a piece of his mind for telling such a lie. 36. Give the devil his due do justice To give the devil his due, I admit that this robber helps the poor. 37. Give up the ghost of a person-to die, of a machine to stop working completely My car gave up the ghost last night. 38. Give vent to to express very strong anger or sadness She wept bitterly at the death of her husband giving vent to her sorrow. 39. Give/Create a false impression deceive, mislead She always gives a false impression about her money. Also check: List of idioms for Kids 40. Give/Show someone the cold shoulder to ignore someone in an obvious manner This officer is not popular as he gives everyone the cold shoulder. 41. Go /Swim with the stream to think or do something like others Easier to go with the stream than to go against the stream. 42. Go back on/upon one’s word/promise to fail to fulfill one’s promise You can rely on Gilbert, he would not go back on his word. 43. Go far/a long way be successful She is hardworking and will go a long way in life. 44. Go out of one’s way to do something to make an extra effort to do something though it is not easy to do Joe really went out of his way to me feel welcome. 45. Go the way of all flesh to die Elena went the way of all flesh in 2008. 46. Go through fire and water to do something very dangerous for someone Joe is my true friend and will go through fire and water for me. 47. Go to any lengths / great lengths to do something be ready to use any meeting to achieve something Rima is ready to go to any lengths to get his aim. 48. Go to law to go to court in order to settle the problem The two brothers went to law over the issue of property 49. Go to pieces to be so upset that you cannot behave in a sensible way He just went to pieces after his wife’s death. 50. Go to rack and ruin to become less successful His business is going to rack and ruin. Infographics (Idioms with Meaning) Download 50 Idioms with Meaning PDF Download Prev Article Next Article Idiomatic Expressions List and Meaning PDF! Learn the big list of idiomatic expressions with their meaning and example sentences, these idiomatic expressions are for IELTS and also British idiomatic expressions also get a quiz of idiomatic expressions. Expressions Meanings Examples A bad quarter of an hour uncomfortable time He spent a bad quarter of an hour with the board of directors A blue-eyed- boy a favorite Beware of him, he is the blue-eyed-boy of the principal (To) affect ignorance to pretend not to know He affects the ignorance of any plan to dismantle the house A Fish out of water a person who feels uncomfortable in his present surroundings He is a fish out of the water He cannot stay here for long A Flash in the pan Something that lasts only for a short time It proved to be a flash in the pan All his efforts have ended in smoke A Freudian slip unintentional mistake revealing true thoughts He made one mistake during his entire speech and it proves to be a Freudian slip A friend at court an influential friend The most important factor of success these days is a friend at court A going concern successful business This project is a lame-duck It needs courage and application to make it a going concert A hot potato an issue that is embarrassing to deal with Do not bring up this subject for discussion in the meeting It is a hot potato A lame-duck an enterprise that is not a success This project is a lame-duck It needs courage and application to make it a going concern A long way out Inaccurate Your assessment of the situation is a long way out An eagle-eye a very quick eye It is very difficult to work beneath his eagle-eye A passing fancy temporary liking It was a passing fancy He does not want to see any longer Apple pie order in perfect order She set everything in the house in apple-pie order within a week of her Arrival Pretty kettle of fish state of confusion, a mix-up It is a pretty kettle of fish you are in Am sorry I cannot help you out A pretty penny quite a lot of money This house must have cost a pretty penny to build A random shot a wild guess It was a random shot but it has come out to be true A ready pen someone who can write easily and quickly A ready pen and will write this article for you within the stipulated period of time A ruling passion a passion that dominates a person’s life The desire for popularity is his ruling passion and he will do everything to achieve it A skeleton in the cupboard something embarrassing or shameful There is a skeleton in every cupboard, we had better not probe into the matter Snake in the grass a deceitful person You should trust your secretory he is a snake in the grass As good as one’s word to keep promise He promised me to send me a watch and he was as good as his words A Thumb-nail sketch a brief description or a small scale drawing You must give me the thumbnail sketch on the man before I go to the meeting Tower of strength a person who can be relied upon for help in time of need He is a tower of strength for me At the first blush at first glance The project does not appeal at the first blush Willing horse a willing worker I want only willing horses for my office (to) be at a loss for words to be so surprised that one does not know what to say (to) be at cross purposes to misunderstand someone He is at a cross purpose with his father but I hope that they will soon end their differences (to) be at one’s best to be most able John is at his best when he is working under pressure (to) be at one’s ease to feel comfortable He is at his ease in the absence of his boss (to) be hard-pressed for something to be under pressure I am hard-pressed for time Please leave me alone for a while (to) be hard put to do something to have difficulty in doing something He was hard put to give a convincing answer to my question (to) be in a flutter to be in a state of nervous excitement He was in a flutter when he saw that the car had a flat tire (to) be in keeping with something to correspond Jealousy is not in keeping with his character (to) be in one’s elements to be in agreeable circumstances He is in his elements Everything has worked out according to his wishes (to) be in one’s line to be in one’s province Singing is not in my line (to) be in the bag to be certain John is sure that the contract is in the bag already (to) be in tune to be in a happy frame of mind, he is in tune. You can talk to him about anything in the world (to) be of a piece with in keeping with The latest letter is of a piece with her usual conduct (to) be one too many to be better than John is one too many for Shaun at chess (to) butter someone up to flatter You will have to butter him up to get something from him (to) catch someone napping to discover someone not doing what one should be doing The manager caught some workers napping when he visited the factory (to) clip someone’s wings to slow down someone’s progress The bank manager clipped his wings when he refused to advance the required loan (to) cool one’s heels to wait I was left in the car to cool my heels for about half an hour Crossed in love disappointed in love He has been crossed in love a number of times (to) drop a line to write She dropped a line to thank me for the birthday gift Every inch completely, entirely Shylock was every Inch a Jew Eye-wash deceit All this sweet talk is eye-wash In fact he does not like me (to) feel someone’s pulse to find out the secret opinion In his conversation yesterday, he tried to feel my pulse about the new project Feet of clay to be weak or cowardly He has feet of Clay You cannot depend on him (to) fight shy of something to avoid Why do you fight shy of writing articles for literary magazines? I am you can do it (to) Fly off the handle to become furious He flew handle when she accused him of double French leave leave without permission He goes French leave so often that sometimes it becomes difficult for me to provide him necessary cover (to) get a word in edgeways to get a chance to speak I could hardly get a word in edgeways It was khan who Spoke all the time Give a dog a bad name and kill him to attribute fault and dismiss He was given a dog name and killed only because he did not carry out the evil wish of the landlord (to) go flat out to do with all one’s power Imran Khan went flat out and captured three wickets in one spell of five overs (to) go grey to become grey-haired He is going grey even at 3 (to) go into black to mourn She went into black for her husband (to) go red to blush His unbridled praise for her physical charms made her go red Good at heart kind I could not care less about what He has said I know he is good at heart (to) hand a bouquet to pay compliments The retiring Principal was handed a bouquet worthy of his services to the College (to) handle someone with kid gloves to treat very Carefully She is a very sensitive lady You will have to handle her with kid gloves (to) hang on to something retain, not to part with Old Jeopardy should have retired long ago, but he is hanging on to his job Also Check: List of Common Idioms (to) have a bee in one’s bonnet to be slightly unbalanced mentally His actions are erratic because he has a bee in his bonnet (to) have a bone in the leg to be tired I cannot walk in his place I have a bone in the leg (to) have a bone to pick to have a cause of complaint she has a bone to pick with him about the quarrel they had yesterday (to) have a way with one to have some pleasing Characteristic She is not a charming girl but she has a way with her that is appealing (to) have the gift of the gab to have the talent for speaking The only thing he has is the gift of the gab (to) hold water to be sound This argument does not hold water In good time with time to spare He finished his work in good time In the pink good in health I am very happy to learn that you are in the pink Iron something out resolve You can iron out your differences only if you sit down and talk (to) join forces with someone to cooperate I appealed to him to join forces with me to restore the prestige of the family To keep one’s fingers crossed to hope for the best He is very unpredicted We can only keep our fingers crossed To kick up a row to make fuss She kicked up such a big row over nothing To knuckle under to give way He knuckled under after putting up some resistance Let someone off forgive The principal let the student off with a warning To live by one’s wits to live by deceit or fraud I suspect your friend lives by his wits (to) look green to look sick You do look green Is anything the matter? (to) lose one’s head to lose the presence of mind He lost his head as soon as he read the charge-sheet (to) meet someone halfway to make a compromise I am prepared to meet him halfway You can tell him so on my behalf (to) mind one’s p’s and q’s to be very polite Yesterday you made a very bad impression You must mind your p’s and q’s in polite society Neck or nothing every risk must be taken There was no choice It was a case of neck or nothing with us On the square above board I am sure, they will succeed in their business There dealings are on the square Other fish to try other business to do She can’t come to see you daily, she has other fish to try Out of character not typical He was not his usual self today His conversation was completely out of character (to) pat someone on the back to congratulate someone on something You deserve a pat on the back for the excellent job you have done (to) pay through the nose to pay dearly She is paying through the nose for her faults (to) pick holes in something to find fault with something Don’t pick holes in everything that other people do (to) play fast and loose to say one thing and do another He always plays fast and lose it has become his second nature (to) pluck at someones heart strings to try to arouse sympathy Do not pluck at everyone’s heart strings by narrating your tale of woe (to) plumb the depths of something to try to find out the truth wish to plumb the depths of the problem she is facing She is really leading a miserable life (to) put your best foot forward to make effort You won’t be able to complete this work before the end of the month unless you put your best foot forward (to) run in the blood characteristic of the members of a family Gallantry runs in the blood of Indians (to) set her cap at to pay attention to In my opinion, Sana has set her cap at Joe Settle for something be prepared to accept I am not prepared to settle for a second-rate job Shake someone up upset The news of his father’s death has shaken him up badly (to) sit on the fence not to take sides the policy of sitting on the fence does not always pay (to) spill the beans to tell a secret Why can’t you be careful You have spilled the beans (to) stick to one’s colors to be faithful to the cause The Principal advised the students to stick to their colors Stir something up revoke He is trying to stir up trouble again, but he would not succeed this time (to) take a firm line to deal decisively you will have to take a firm line with those employees who do not pull their weight (to) take with a grain of salt to doubt I take his Statements with a grain of salt (to) talk shop to talk exclusively about one’s professional affairs He always talks shop That is why so many Persons shun his company (to) talk through one’s hat to talk nonsense He is talking through his hat when he says that he is going to help you in time or need Tell a person straight to speak frankly Told her straight that I meant business The olive branch offer of peace America holds out the olive branch to all its neighbors The backbone chief support He is the backbone of the family The finger of fate destiny The finger of fate has always guided him to success The fourth estate the press the fourth estate plays an important role in a democratic set-up The pick of the bunch boss of all Rose is the pick of the bunch among flowers The skin of one’s teeth just manage to escape we escaped from falling into the river by the skin of our teeth The underdog a person at a disadvantage She always sympathizes with the underdog Till the cows come home a long time to wait He is prepared to wait for her till the cows come home (to) tighten one’s belt to spend less money We must tighten our belts to pull through this crisis Touch bottom to sink very low He cannot sink any lower He has already touched bottom Tongue in cheek to say one thing and mean another G B Shaw often writes with his tongue in his cheek Up with the lark to rise very early You must get up with the lark and go for a walk if you want to improve your health Walkout on someone abandon When reconciliation failed she walked out on her husband (to) wear the breeches to be the controlling force in the house He is only a figurehead It is his wife who wears the breaches With the tail between the legs with a beaten look He retired from the ring with his tail between the legs Win one’s spurs to make one’s reputation He won his spurs as a statesman in the parliament Win the palm to win a prize I hope your daughter wins the palm by topping the 1st of successful candidates this year Wreathed in smiles smiling broadly Her face was wreathed in smiles when she saw her fiancé Download this lesson in infographics Pdf. (Get Here) Prev Article Next Article green circles with idiom definition and two example sentences Created by Karina Goto for YourDictionary Owned by YourDictionary, Copyright YourDictionary Idioms are words or phrases that aren’t meant to be taken literally. Webster's New World adds "[It] has a meaning that differs from the literal meaning of its parts taken together." For example, if you say someone has “cold feet,” it doesn’t mean their toes are actually cold. Rather, it means they’re nervous about something. In this article The examples below demonstrate how you can’t easily understand the meaning of idioms without knowing what they mean within the culture. The next time someone says "It's raining cats and dogs!" you’ll know it has nothing to do with animals, but rather that it's raining quite hard. Idiom Meaning Example back to the drawing board To start over in planning a project or idea. I’m going back to the drawing board. beat around the bush to delay or avoid talking about something difficult or unpleasant Don’t beat around the bush. bent out of shape to be upset Why are you so bent out of shape? bite the bullet to accept a negative aspect of a situation in order to proceed After some reflection, he decided to bite the bullet. blessing in disguise aseeming misfortune that turns out to be for the best Getting fired turned out to be a blessing in disguise. call it a night go to bed I’m going to call it a night. chip on their shoulder a habitually combative attitude, usually because of a grievance, sense of inferiority, or having something to prove He’s got a chip on his shoulder. cross that bridge when we get there to not worry about a problem until it happens We’ll cross that bridge when we get there. cut corners to do a less-than-thorough or incomplete job; to do something poorly or take shortcuts. Don’t cut corners. cut me some slack to treat someone in a less critical way Would you cut me some slack? dime a dozen something that is very common These red poppies are a dime a dozen. get out of hand to get out of control She let things get out of hand. hang in there to stick with something Hang in there. jump the gun to act or begin too soon or without due caution Don’t jump the gun. let someone off the hook relieved of a duty, burden, responsibility, or pressure He decided to let her off the hook. missed the boat to fail to take advantage of an opportunity; to overlook or be too late to pursue an option or course of action He missed the boat. once in a blue moon to do something very rarely I go out for walks once in a blue moon. pull yourself together to calm down Pull yourself together, man! rubbed me the wrong way to irritate or bother She seriously rubbed me the wrong way. speak of the devil to comment on the fact that someone you were talking about just appeared There he is, speak of the devil. storm in a teacup to make a fuss over an unimportant matter Their fight was a storm in a teacup. the straw that broke the camel's back the last in a series of bad or annoying things which makes someone run out of patience That was the straw that broke the camel’s back. the best of both worlds to receive benefits or advantages from two situations (and no disadvantages) Well, she’s got the best of both worlds. under the weather to feel sick I’m feeling under the weather. wrap my mind/head around to understand or accept something I’m sorry but I just can’t seem to wrap my head around it. you can say that again to express agreement with something that was just said Wow, you can say that again. Similar to various cultures who adopt their own set of idioms, smaller groups of people do the same. Actors, painters, performers, and writers tend to use their own idioms, almost bordering on slang, to encourage eachother and forge a unique sense of community. Here are some of the most popular idioms used in the arts world. Idiom Meaning bombed to put on a bad performance break a leg good luck break new ground to create something impressive or important get the hook pull an actor offstage due to a bad performance knock ‘em dead do a great job sing your heart out give it all of your effort sink your teeth into it excited to fully start doing something upstaged/stole the show when one performer does better than another Remember, a group of people with shared interests will have their own idioms. As with anything else in life, they’ll be easier to understand if you listen to the context clues and ask questions when in doubt. English speakers aren’t unique in their use of idioms. Where there’s language, there’s figurative language. That is, people are going to play on words and come up with quippy, new expressions anywhere. Let’s take a look at some of our global neighbors’ idioms: In Armenian, “stop ironing my board” means stop bothering me. In French, “when chickens have teeth” means something’s never going to happen. Also in French, “I have other cats to whip” means I have other things to do. In German, “to tie a bear to someone” means you’ve tricked them. Also in German, “an elephant made out of a fly” means to make a big deal out of nothing. In Italian, “not all doughnuts come with a hole” means you don’t always get what you want. Also in Italian, “to treat someone with a fish in their face” means to disrespect someone. In Japanese, “my cheeks are falling off” means the food is really delicious. Also in Japanese, “to have dumplings instead of flowers” means you’ve chosen something useful over something decorative. In Polish, “mustard after lunch” means it’s too late to do something. Also in Polish, to “get stuffed with hay” means someone’s asking you to go away. In Portuguese, “he who doesn’t have a dog, hunts with cats” means you make the most of what you’ve been given. Also in Portuguese, “take your little horse away from the rain” means something’s never going to happen. In Spanish, “a cat in gloves catches no mice” means nice guys always finish last. Also in Spanish, “a lot of noise and no walnuts” means someone’s all talk and no action. It’s very important to have a firm understanding of each culture’s idioms. The terminology that one country uses can have a vastly different meaning in another country. For example, in Finnish, "with long teeth" means you’re doing something you don’t want to do. However, in French, to “have long teeth" means you’re very ambitious. Quite different, right? You simply can’t be literal when examining an idiom. They tend to make learning a new language difficult, but they’re also used in languages all across the globe. Idioms aren’t only regional; they also vary according to people's interests and social groups. The best way to understand the meaning of certain idioms is to chat with locals and ask them for clarification if any of their idioms confuse you. If all else fails, talk to your friend Google, and make sure what you heard is really what it means. You can also explore the difference between literally and figuratively to help you make sense of these words and phrases. Do you have any favorite idioms? If not, maybe you'll find one among some idioms about love.