

Idioms – A & B

Absence makes the heart grow fonder

- being far away from a person you love makes your love even stronger

A picture is worth a thousand words

- pictures can give more information than words alone

Actions speak louder than words

- what you actually do is more important than what you say you will do

(It's) all in your head

- imagined, not real

Asleep at the wheel

- not paying attention; not doing his/her responsibilities

Back to square one

- start over; back to the beginning

Beggars can't be choosers

- If you beg (or ask) for a thing or a favor, then you shouldn't complain about what you get.

Better late than never

- It's better to do something late than to not do it.

Better safe than sorry

- It's better to be cautious (careful) than to take a risk that you might regret.

Break a leg!

- This is a (funny) way to say "Good luck" – we usually say it to someone before a performance or contest.

Idioms – C & D

Catch-22

- A "catch-22" is a situation in which it is impossible to get the result that you want. (For example: "I can't work because I don't have a car, but I can't get a car because I don't have a job." This is a "catch-22.")

Change of heart

- If you have a "change of heart," this means that you change the way that you think or feel about something.

Cheap shot

- A “cheap shot” is words that are mean or unfair. (For example, if two people are arguing about politics, and one of them calls the other “fat” or “ugly,” this is a “cheap shot.”)

(get) Cold feet

- to get scared or to lose the courage to do something (usually used when someone decides that they don’t want to get married).

Dead to the world

- If someone is “dead to the world,” they are unaware of what is happening around them and not paying attention.

Deer in headlights

- We say someone looks like a “deer in headlights” if they are so surprised, shocked, or scared that they cannot respond, move, or speak. They look “frozen,” like a deer in a car’s headlights.

Don’t give up your day job

- This is a funny way to tell someone that they are very bad at doing something (such as singing or playing sports).

Don’t hold your breath

- Don’t get excited about something happening, because it probably won’t happen.

Don’t judge a book by its cover

- Don’t judge things or people by how they look. Instead, get to know them better before making an opinion.

Idioms – E&F

(To) each his own

- Everyone has his/her own preferences; not everyone likes the same things.

The early bird gets the worm

- If you start early, you have a better chance of success; it’s good to get an early start.

Easier said than done

- This means that it is very easy to say something than to actually *do* it.

Every cloud has a silver lining

- This means that every bad situation also brings opportunities or good situations. We often say this to comfort people and make them feel better.

Eyes are bigger than one’s stomach

- We say this if someone orders or prepares a lot of food because they are hungry (their “eyes are big”) but they are unable to finish eating it all.

(a) Face only a mother could love

- This is a funny way to say that a person is very ugly.

Few and far between

- If something is “few and far between” this means that it happens only occasionally and not often.

First come, first served

- This means that the first people to arrive are the first people who get to eat (or participate in something)

For kicks

- Just for fun (“I’m not a professional basketball player. I just play for kicks.”)

From rags to riches

- If someone goes “from rags to riches,” this means that they start life poor and become rich.

Full of hot air

- If you say someone is “full of hot air” this means that you don’t believe them.

Idioms – G & H

Get something off your chest

- When you get something off your chest, you talk about something that had been bothering you, but that you hadn’t told anyone yet.

Give (someone) a hand

- To help someone do something, or
- To applaud; clap after a performance

Give (someone) a piece of your mind

- When you give someone a piece of your mind, you yell at someone or tell someone why you are very angry at him/her.

(Take it with a) grain of salt

- Don’t take it seriously; don’t necessarily believe it, because it’s not necessarily true

Grin and bear it

- To “bear” means to “endure,” so if you “grin and bear” something, that means that you accept something that you don’t like without complaining.

Have a ball OR Have a blast

- To have a lot of fun

Head over heels in love

- Very in love with someone

Here today, gone tomorrow

- You say this when something disappears very quickly or suddenly

Hindsight is 20/20 (“twenty-twenty”)

- It is easier to see clearly in the past than in the present. (We often say this when we regret a decision that we made in the past and wish we had done something differently.)

Home sweet home

- We say this when we are glad to be home (after a long trip or vacation, for example).

Idioms – I & J**In a pickle****In a jam****In a fix**

These all mean “in trouble” or “in a difficult situation.”

In one ear and out the other

- This means that you forget something as soon as you hear it.

In the driver’s seat

- In charge of a situation

In the long run

- In the distant future; eventually; in the end

(You’re) in over your head

- If someone is “in over his/her head,” this means that they have a problem or situation that is too difficult or complicated for them to deal with or solve.

It ain’t over till the fat lady sings

- You cannot be sure about the result (of a game or situation) until it has officially finished. (This comes from opera, in which a “fat lady” often sings at the very end of the opera.)

Jog my memory

- If you “jog my memory,” this means that you help me remember something that I’ve forgotten

Jump down someone’s throat

- To yell at someone very angrily; to shout at someone for doing something that you don’t like.

Jump the gun

- To do something too soon or too early. (This comes from racing, when runners must wait for the “gun” to start the race. If they start before the gun, then they start too early and they “jump the gun.”)

Just around the corner

- If something is “just around the corner,” it will happen very soon.

Just what the doctor ordered

- If something is “just what the doctor ordered,” this means that it is exactly what is needed; the perfect thing for this situation.

Idioms – M & N

(a) mixed blessing

You can say something is a mixed blessing if it seems to be good, but in fact has bad effects as well as good effects.

made of money

If you’re “made of money”, you have a lot of it.

(to) make a killing

If you make a killing, you make a lot of money from a sale or a deal of some sort.

(to) make ends meet

To make ends meet is to earn just enough to pay for a place to live and your daily expenses.

(to) make the most of something

If you make the most of something, you try as much as possible out of it.

(to) make up your mind

To make a decision.

(to) meet someone halfway

If you meet someone halfway, you compromise with them and agree to some, but not all, of their demands, in order to come to an agreement.

neck and neck

If two competitors or candidates, etc, are neck and neck, then they are very close and neither is clearly winning.

(it's like finding a) needle in a haystack

If trying to find something is like looking for a needle in a haystack, it means that it is very difficult, if not impossible to find among everything around it.

no holds barred

If there are no holds barred, there are no rules of conduct; you can do anything.

no laughing matter

Something that is no laughing matter is very serious.

Idioms – O & P

(to get) off on the wrong foot -

- to get a bad start on a relationship or task

(to be) off the hook -

- to no longer have to deal with a tough situation

off the record -

- an expression used to describe something said in

confidence that the one speaking doesn't want attributed to him/her

on pins and needles -

- anxious or nervous, especially in anticipation of something

on the fence -

- undecided

out of the blue -

- an expression used to describe something that suddenly and unexpectedly occurs

over my dead body -

- something you say when you absolutely will not allow something to happen

over the top -

- very excessive

(to) pass the buck -

- to avoid responsibility by giving it to someone else

pedal to the metal -

- to go full speed, especially while driving a vehicle

(to) pig out -

- to eat a large quantity of food (usually junk food) quickly

pipe down -

- to shut up, or be quiet

(to) pull the plug -

- to stop something, to bring something to an end

Idioms – R & S

(to) rack one's brain -

- to think very hard when trying to remember something

or solve a problem

rags to riches -

- when someone starts life very poor, but ends up quite wealthy

(a) raw deal -

- an unfair deal

(to) read between the lines -

- to find the real message in what you're reading or hearing; to glean a meaning that cannot be found in a literal interpretation of the words

(to) recharge one's batteries -

- to do something in order to regain one's energy, usually after working hard for a long time

(to) roll out the red carpet/to give someone the red carpet treatment -

- to give someone a very special welcome, often by material means

red tape -

- a negative word for official paperwork and bureaucracy that one must deal with

safe and sound -

- safe, and out of harm's way

salad days -

- an especially happy period in one's life; often refers to one's youth

(pour/rub) salt in a wound -

- to add insult to injury; to make someone feel even worse about an already bad or painful situation

(to) save face -

- to manage to protect your own reputation, often in a scandal or embarrassing situation

(the) salt of the earth -

- people who are kind, dependable and unpretentious

Idioms – T & UWXY

the tables have turned -

- when a situation has changed, giving the advantage to the person or party who had previously been at a disadvantage

(to) take a raincheck -

- to decline an offer now, but suggest that you will accept it later

(to) take something/someone for granted

- to not worry/think about something because you assume that it will always be there – to take someone for granted is to not show your appreciation for them

ugly duckling

- a child who shows little promise (and is often literally ugly), but grows into a real talent or beauty

uncharted waters -

- an unfamiliar situation with which you have no experience

(to be) under fire

- to be attacked or criticized heavily and harshly

(to say something) under your breath -

- something that is said under one's breath is whispered, or said very quietly

(to) watch your back

- if someone is after your job, or out to harm you in any way, you need to "watch your back"

(to) wash your hands of something -

- to disassociate yourself from a situation, and accept no responsibility for what will or could happen

water under the bridge -

- something that is in the past, and is no longer important or troubling

x-rated -

- if something is x-rated, it is especially racy, and unsuitable for children

your call

- if something is your call, it's up to you to make a decision