

IDIOMS

IDIOM	MEANING
A	
a bad egg	a worthless person
a bag of bones	a person who is so thin that his bones can almost be seen
a bed of roses	very comfortable
a bolt from the blue	a completely unexpected action, often an unpleasant surprise
a bone of contention	something that will cause a quarrel
a bright spark	an intelligent person
a bull in a china shop	a very clumsy person who is very destructive
a cat on hot bricks	very nervous
a cat-and-dog life	always quarrelling
a change of heart	change one's opinion
a chip off the old block	resemble the parents or any of the older members of the family
a close shave	a narrow escape
a cock and bull story	a silly and incredible story
a cog in a machine	an unimportant role in an organisation
a cold fish	a person who shows little emotion
a daredevil	a brave and reckless person
a diehard	someone who always refuses to accept new ideas
a dog in the manger	one who prevents others from using what he cannot use
a dog with two tails	a person who is extremely pleased
a drop in the ocean	a very small quantity
a feather in one's cap	something one has reason to be proud of (such as promotion, honour award, recognition)
a fish out of water	one who is in an awkward or embarrassing situation
a flash in the pan	a sudden, single success

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IDIOM	MEANING
a fly in the ointment	something which prevents a plan from being carried out smoothly
a free hand	the opportunity to do as one thinks best
a good Samaritan	a stranger who helps you when you are faced with some problems
a good-for-nothing	a useless person
a Greek gift	a gift given with a treacherous motive
a greenhorn	someone new and inexperienced in a job
a Gretna Green marriage	a runaway marriage
a hard nut to crack	a problem difficult to solve
a ladies' man	a man who is fond of female company
a man of his word	a person who always does what he promised to do
a man of straw	a weak and worthless person
a mare's nest	a confused situation
a mercurial temperament	fickle / light-hearted
a month of Sundays	an indefinitely long period
a near thing	when you nearly failed to achieve something and only just succeeded
a nine day's wonder	an event which creates a sensation for a time but is soon forgotten
a red herring	something meant to mislead people and throw them off the trail
a red rag to a bull	something that deliberately angers someone
a Roland for an Oliver	tit for tat / an eye for an eye / a tooth for a tooth / an effective retort
a scapegoat	someone who is blamed for something he did not do
a skeleton in the cupboard	a dreadful secret that happened to you in the past
a slip of the tongue	something said in error
a snake in the grass	an enemy who strikes under cover
a square peg in a round hole	a person doing unsuitable work

IDIOM	MEANING
a stone's throw	a very short distance
a storm in a teacup	unnecessarily excited reaction to an unimportant matter
a sweet tooth	a liking for sweet things or food
a tall order	a difficult task to carry out
a tall story	a story that is difficult to believe
a thorn in one's flesh	a constant source of irritation to one
a triton among the minnows	a person who completely dominates those around him
a wet blanket	a person who discourages other people / one who is a damper to enjoyment
a white elephant	an expensive but useless possession
a white lie	a lie told to avoid making someone upset
a wild goose chase	a vain attempt
a wild-cat scheme	a rash scheme which will probably fail
above board	honest / straightforward
Achilles heel	a weak spot
after one's own heart	exactly as one desires
air one's opinion	give vent to one's feeling in public
All is fish that comes to the net.	One should take advantage of everything that comes his way.
All that glitters is not gold.	Things are not always as attractive as they appear.
all thumbs	clumsy
an admirable Crichton	a very talented person
an Adonis	a very handsome man
an all-rounder	a person with the ability to do a number of jobs satisfactorily
an Amazon	a masculine woman / a tall and strong woman
an Ananias	a liar
an Apollo	a man with a perfect physique
an El Dorado	an imaginary place of great riches

IDIOM	MEANING
an empty purse / a light purse	poverty
an exodus	the departure of a large group of people
an eye for an eye	return evil for evil
an eye-servant	one who works only under supervision
an iron-bound coast	a coast surrounded by rocks
An old bird is not to be caught with chaff.	An experienced person is not easily fooled or deceived.
an old hand	someone with a lot of experience
an old head on young shoulders	wisdom in a young person
apple of discord	a cause of strife, contention or quarrel
apple-pie order	in perfect order
arcadian life	a blissfully happy, rural and simple life
arm in arm	in a friendly way
armed to the teeth	fully armed
as plain as the nose on one's face	easily seen
as the crow flies	in a straight line / the shortest distance between two points
As you make your bed, so you must lie on it.	You will have to bear the consequences of your own mistake or misdeed.
at arm's length	avoid being too friendly with someone
at daggers drawn	be deadly enemies
at first blush	when first thought of
at hand	near (of place and time)
at one go	at a single attempt
at one's fingertips	know thoroughly
at one's wits' end	be very annoyed as one has tried his best to solve a problem but to no avail
at sixes and sevens	in confusion
at someone's heels	close behind someone

IDIOM	MEANING
at the eleventh hour	at the last moment
at the end of his tether	unable to proceed any further
at the top of one's voice	very loudly
attic salt	refined, subtle wit
B	
back in harness	resume work after a holiday
backbite someone	speak ill of someone
backbone of something	the most important part of something
backstairs influence	influence exerted in an underhand manner
bad blood	angry feeling between people
bad faith	dishonest intention
bad form	bad manners
bag and baggage	with all one's belongings
bandy words	argue
bark up the wrong tree	use a wrong method
Barmecide feast	imaginary benefits
be all ears	be eager to listen
be at a loss for words	not knowing what to say
be at odds	disagree
be born with a silver spoon in one's mouth	be born into a rich family
be caught napping	be taken by surprise
be child's play	a very easy thing to do
be cocksure	be very certain
be glad to see the back of someone	feel pleased to see someone go away
be head and shoulders above someone	superior to someone
be no spring chicken	be no longer young
bear the palm	be victorious
beat about the bush	talk about something without coming to the point of the issue

IDIOM	MEANING
bed and board	lodging and food
beeline	the shortest distance between two places
before long	soon / in a short while
behind one's back	without one's knowledge
behind the scenes	in private
bell the cat	do something very dangerous
beside oneself	mad with grief or rage
beside the mark	irrelevant
beside the point	irrelevant
better half	one's husband or wife
beyond all dispute	undoubtedly
bite off more than one can chew	undertake a task that is beyond one's ability
bite one's lip	prevent oneself from showing his emotions
bite someone's head off	scold someone angrily
bite the hand that feeds you	be ungrateful to someone who has helped you
black sheep of the family	the member of the family who brings disgrace to his relatives
Blood is thicker than water.	It is natural that one usually takes side of his family.
blow hot and cold	constantly change one's mind about a proposal
blow one's own trumpet	boast about oneself
blue blood	the fact that someone was born into a family from the highest social class
blue book	the report of the Act or proceedings of the British Parliament
blue ribbon	the highest prize in any sport competition or tournament
bombshell	a sudden surprising event or news
bone dry	quite dry
bow the knee	submit
breach of promise	failure to keep a promise to marry one to whom you are betrothed

IDIOM	MEANING
breadwinner	one who provides the means of livelihood for himself and his family
break one's heart	cause great sorrow
break the back of something	finish the hardest part of a task
break the ice	be the first to start
break the neck of	accomplish the hardest part of a task
bring someone to his knees	defeat someone
build castles in the air	daydream
burn the candle at both ends	use up too much energy without resting
burn the midnight oil	stay up late in order to work
bury the hatchet	forget past quarrels and become friends again
but me no buts	not to bring forward any objections
by fits and starts	spasmodically / not continuous / intermittently
by hook or by crook	by fair or foul means
by leaps and bounds	very quickly
by word of mouth	orally
C	
call a spade a spade	be very frank and outspoken
call someone names	insult someone
can't make head nor tail of something	not be able to understand something
capital punishment	the death sentence / the death penalty
capital ship	a warship of the most powerful kind
carry coals to Newcastle	do something unnecessary
carry someone off his feet	fill someone with strong enthusiasm
carry weight	be important
cat's paw	one used as a tool to do something dangerous
caught red-handed	caught while committing the crime
child's play	an easy task

IDIOM	MEANING
clutch at straws	continue to look for solutions
come back down to earth	be practical or realistic after having an exciting time
come to a head	reach a critical stage
come to hand	be disclosed
come to the point	reach the most important fact
cook one's goose	spoil one's plans
cool one's heels	be kept waiting for a long time
cry over spilt milk	be upset over something about which nothing else could be done
curl one's lip	show scorn
curry favour with	try to get someone's approval by flattering
cut the Gordian knot	take a drastic step in deciding a difficult problem
cut your coat according to your cloth	spend only what you can afford
D	
day of reckoning	the time when one has to face the consequences of his past mistake
dead beat	quite exhausted
dead broke	without a cent
devil's bones	dice
do the trick	achieve one's purpose
dog-cheap	extremely cheap
Don't cross the bridge until you come to it.	Do not anticipate difficulties.
donkey work	work that is boring
donkey's years	a very long time
dot the i's and cross the t's	give precise details
down in the mouth	feeling sad
down-and-out	ruined or penniless
down-at-heel	being in poor circumstances
Draconian Legislation	very severe laws

IDIOM	MEANING
drag over the coals	scold severely
draw a blank	get nothing (as a result of looking for something)
draw the line	not to do something which you think is wrong
drop a brick	make a mistake
drop someone a line	write a letter to someone
Dutch courage	bravery induced by alcoholic drinks
E	
eagle-eyed	having sharp eyesight
eat humble pie	admit one's mistake
eat one's heart out	feel extremely upset
eat one's words	admit that what one said was wrong
eat out of someone's hand	be willing and ready to do what one is told
Elysian happiness	a state of perfect bliss
end in smoke	be destroyed
escape by the skin of one's teeth	have a very narrow escape
evil days	a period of misfortune
eyewash	nonsense
F	
Fabian tactics	a policy of wearing down the opponent by delaying action
face a thing out	persist boldly
face the music	take punishment without complaint
face-to-face	in the presence of the person
fall foul of someone	quarrel with someone
fall on one's feet	overcome difficulties
fan the flames	increase the excitement
far from it	not at all
feel in one's bones	feel certain
feel run-down	feel unwell
fight like cat and dog	be in constant fighting / quarelling

IDIOM	MEANING
fight tooth and nail	make a lot of effort to achieve something
find one's tongue	be able to speak again after being too shy to speak
fish in troubled waters	try to gain an advantage for oneself by interfering in the troubles of other people
fishy	doubtful
fly off the handle	lose one's temper
follow one's nose	go straight ahead
foot the bill	pay for something
foul play	unfair dealing in a game / cheating
free-for-all	a disorderly fight or argument in which everyone present joins in
from hand to hand	from one person to another
from hand to mouth	in poverty
from the horse's mouth	from the genuine or first-hand source
from top to toe	including every part of one's body
G	
gain the upper hand	gain mastery of
get into hot water	get into trouble
get on the bandwagon	recognise the popularity and success of a person and support him for personal gain
Get on your high horse.	be arrogant
get one's monkey up	get angry
get worked up	become excited
give ear	listen attentively
give oneself airs	pretend to be good
give rein to	allow a person to have his own way
give someone a piece of your mind	scold someone and tell him why you are angry
Give someone an inch and they'll take a mile.	One will abuse his privilege and try to get a lot more.
give someone the cold shoulder	make someone feel unwelcome

IDIOM	MEANING
give someone the edge of one's tongue	scold someone
give someone the slip	escape from someone
give someone the slipper	slap someone
give the devil his due	give a person credit for his good deed however worthless he may be
give the lie to	prove to be a lie
give up the ghost	die
go against the grain	be contrary to one's upbringing
go back on one's word	fail to keep a promise
go begging	sold very cheaply because no one cares to buy
go cap in hand	beseech in a humble manner
go off at a tangent	change to a different course of thought or action suddenly
go it alone	do something without help from others
go to any lengths	be ready to do anything in order to achieve or avoid something
go to law	take legal proceedings
go to the devil	be off
go to the dogs	become worse
go to the root of the matter	find out the source of the matter
go with the stream	do or think as the majority of people do
go wrong	make a mistake
grade up	improve the stock by crossing with a better breed
green with envy	be jealous
H	
hair's breadth	a very small distance
halcyon days	a period in the past with peace and happiness
hand in glove with someone	closely connected to someone
hands off	do not touch

IDIOM	MEANING
hang on someone's words	listen eagerly to every word
hang up one's hat	settle down at a place
happy-go-lucky	easy-going
hard and fast rules	very strict rules
hard of hearing	almost deaf
hard-line	being extreme and severe
harp on the same string	refer repeatedly to the same subject
have a bee in one's bonnet	keep talking about the same thing again and again
have a bone to pick with someone	say something to someone that might cause a quarrel
have a finger in the pie	be involved in something
have a good head on one's shoulders	have good judgment
have a sword of Damocles hanging over one's head	live in the constant fear of some impending danger
have an axe to grind	have a strong opinion about something
have an itching palm	be open to bribery
have cold feet	lack courage to do something
have green fingers	be good at making plants grow
have no backbone	have no will of one's own
have one foot in the grave	be nearly dead
have one's back to the wall	be in a difficult position
have one's hands full	be very busy
have one's head in the clouds	live in dreamland
have one's head screwed on	be sensible
have one's heart in one's mouth	feel afraid
have seen better days	was once prosperous
have something at one's fingertips	know something thoroughly

IDIOM	MEANING
have something up one's sleeve	have a surprise plan
have the last word	make the final statement
have the trump card	have some methods of becoming victorious
have too many irons in the fire	be engaged in too many things at the same time
head and ears	completely
head over heels (in love)	completely in love
heap coals on someone's head	return good for evil
heart and soul	with great enthusiasm
heartfelt	sincere
heartrending	causing deep grief
heartstrings	deepest feelings of love
hector someone	bully someone
heels over head	hastily
hermetically sealed	sealed closely so as to exclude air
high and dry	on one's own
high-flown language	bombastic language
His bread is well buttered.	He is in fortunate circumstances.
His heart is in his boots.	He is very disappointed.
hit below the belt	do something unfairly to someone
hit the nail on the head	mention the true facts of a case
Hobson's choice	no choice at all
hold one's tongue	keep a thing secret
hold out the olive branch	offer to end an argument
hold someone to his word	ensure that someone keeps his promise
hold the purse strings	have control of the finance of a family or organisation
hold the reins	be in full control of things
hope against hope	hope in spite of the unfavourable signs

IDIOM	MEANING
hornets' nest	a situation with great trouble
hostage to fortune	a risky action
I	
if the worst comes to the worst	if what is feared eventually happens
in a body	as a whole
in a fix	in an awkward situation
in a jiffy	in an exceedingly short time
in a nutshell	express accurately in very few words
in a quandary	being unable to decide
in a spot	in a difficult situation
in bad odour	in bad repute
in black and white	written down on paper
in cold blood	without showing emotion
in Davy Jones' Locker	at the bottom of the sea
in deep water	in a difficult situation
in for a penny, in for a pound	Since one has started doing something, he should complete it instead of doing it halfway.
in good faith	with honest intentions
in good shape	in good physical condition
in hand	under complete control
in one ear and out the other	hear something but forget it very quickly
in someone's bad books	out of favour with someone
in someone's good books	in favour with someone
in someone's shoes	in the situation someone is in
in someone's way	obstructing someone
in stitches	laughing uncontrollably
in the arms of Morpheus	asleep
in the dark	in ignorance
in the face of	in the presence of

IDIOM	MEANING
in the know	informed (of a secret matter)
in the long run	eventually
in the nick of time	only just in time
in the pink	in very good health
in the pipeline	already on the way
in the same boat	in the same circumstances
in the teeth of	in opposition to
in the twinkling of an eye	very quickly
in touch with someone	in communication with someone
It is as broad as it is long.	It is the same whichever way one views it.
It never rains but it pours.	Problems always happen at the same time.
J	
jack-of-all-trades	one who does many things but expert in none
John Bull	an Englishman
jump out of the frying pan into the fire	come out of a trouble and get into a worse one
K	
keep a person at arm's length	refuse to be on familiar terms with someone
keep a straight face	hide one's amusement by not smiling
keep an eye on	watch carefully
keep body and soul together	keep alive
keep in mind	remember
keep one's head	remain calm
keep one's head above water	avoid debt
keep quiet	keep a secret
keep the ball rolling	keep things going
keep up appearances	make things appear well whether they are or not
keep up with the Joneses	try to compete with neighbours or friends in buying luxury items

IDIOM	MEANING
kick the bucket	die
kick up one's heels	enjoy oneself
kill the goose that lays the golden egg	lose a valuable source of income
kill two birds with one stone	do two tasks with one action
kiss the dust	fall to the earth because one is dead
knit the brow	frown
know the ropes	be well informed
knuckle under	give in submissively
kowtow to someone	act in a very servile manner towards someone
L	
laugh on the wrong side of one's mouth	feel upset when things do not happen as expected
laugh up your sleeve	laugh secretly at someone
lay a finger on someone	touch someone in a threatening way
lay down one's arms	stop fighting
lay hands on someone	catch someone roughly
lay heads together	consult
lead someone by the nose	completely control someone
lead to the altar	marry
learn by heart	commit to memory
leave in the lurch	desert someone in difficulties
leave no stone unturned	use all means
lend a hand	help
let bygones be bygones	let past sorrows be forgotten
let one's hair down	behave informally
Let sleeping dogs lie.	Do not recall matters which are likely to cause pain or grief.
let the cat out of the bag	let out the secret
like a bear with a sore head	very bad-tempered

IDIOM	MEANING
live from hand to mouth	spend all one's earnings without making provision for the future
live in clover	live in great luxury
lock, stock and barrel	the whole of everything
long odds	unlikely to happen
look a gift horse in the mouth	be ungrateful to someone who gives you something
Look before you leap.	Think before acting.
look for a needle in a haystack	begin a search for something with only a very slim chance of finding it
look someone in the face	look at someone steadily
look to one's laurels	make an extra effort to guard against defeat
lose face	lose one's dignity
lose heart	be discouraged
lose one's bearings	be uncertain of what to do
lose one's head	lose control
M	
make a clean breast of it	make a full confession
make a day of it	spend the whole day
make a mountain out of a molehill	exaggerate the importance of a small matter
make a point of doing something	attach special importance to doing something
make believe	pretend
make bricks without straw	attempt to do something without proper materials or due preparation
make ends meet	spend within one's income
make eyes	look lovingly
Make hay while the sun shines.	Take advantage of all opportunities.
make light of something	treat as unimportant
make no bones	say or proclaim publicly

IDIOM	MEANING
make one's blood run cold	be filled with terror
make one's mark	achieve success brilliantly
make someone's hair stand on end	cause someone to be filled with fear or terror
make someone's mouth water	raise a strong feeling of desire for something
make the grade	reach the required standard
make up one's mind	decide
march in single file	march one behind the other in a single line
mare's nest	a very complicated situation
mind one's own business	not to interfere
mind one's p's and q's	be careful how one behaves
miss the boat	lose an opportunity
More haste, less speed.	Work done hurriedly is apt to be badly done.
more than flesh and blood can stand	too much for human nature
move heaven and earth	exert all effort
much of a muchness	almost alike
N	
nail a lie	expose a lie publicly
neck and crop	completely
neck or nothing	at all risks
next of kin	nearest of blood relation
nip in the bud	stop something before it can develop
no backbone	no courage and determination
no laughing matter	something very serious
no room to swing a cat	not enough space for anyone to be comfortable
not lift a hand	make no effort to help
not to know a B from a bull's foot	be ignorant of even the simplest thing
not turn a hair	remain calm
not up to the mark	not measuring up to a required standard

IDIOM	MEANING
nothing but skin and bones	without flesh on one's bones (very thin)
O	
odd man out	a person who does not fit into the society
odds and ends	remnants
of the same kidney	of the same nature
off hand	immediately
off one's head	overexcited
off the bat	immediately
off-colour	not very well
on a shoestring	on a very small amount of money
on account of	for the sake of
on all fours	crawl
on one's feet	standing
on one's last legs	very tired
on someone's back	criticise someone several times
on the carpet	be scolded by someone
on the face of it	judging by appearance
on the house	free
on the knees of the gods	beyond human control
on the quiet	secretly
on the rocks	in a desperate situation
on the spur of the moment	without much thought
on the tip of one's tongue	on the point of being uttered
on thin ice	in a dangerous and difficult position
on top of the world	in a very good spirit
once in a blue moon	a very rare occasion
one's bread and butter	one's livelihood
one's heart in the right place	be faithful
one's own flesh and blood	one's relatives

IDIOM	MEANING
one's true colours	as one really is
out of hand	out of control
out of luck	unlucky
out of one's hands	no longer under one's control
out of one's mind	mad
out of sorts	feeling unwell
out of temper	angry
out of the frying pan into the fire	from a bad situation into a worse one
out of the question	impossible
out of the woods	out of danger
out of touch with someone	no longer in contact with someone
out-Herod Herod	exceed in violence

P

paddle one's own canoe	do things by oneself
paint the town red	enjoy oneself in a public place in a wild and noisy manner
palm off a thing	get rid of a thing under false pretences
Parthian shot	a parting word
pass the buck	pass on the unwanted responsibility to someone else
pass the hat around	ask for money from a group of people
pass with flying colours	do very well in a test
pave the way	facilitate
pay lip service	pretend to be loyal
pay off an old score	have one's revenge for an offence made before
pay the piper	receive punishment
pay through the nose	pay too high a price
petticoat government	government under the rule of a female
pick and choose	choose very carefully
pick holes in something	find fault with

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IDIOM	MEANING
pick someone's brains	ask for information from someone who knows a lot about it
pick to pieces	criticise harshly
pin in a poke	buy something blindly
pin money	an allowance for incidental expenses
pin one's faith on	rely on
play second fiddle	take subordinate position
play the game	act fairly and honourably
play to the gallery	endeavour to gain cheap popularity
plough a lonely furrow	do something without help from others
plough the sands	labour uselessly
poke one's nose into	interfere (without any cause)
pooh-pooh an idea	express contempt for an idea
pour oil on troubled waters	try to end a quarrel by speaking calmly
prick up one's ears	listen attentively
pull down someone	humiliate someone
pull one's socks up	improve in what one is doing
pull someone's leg	play a joke on someone
pull strings	get the help of high officials in order to get something
pull through	succeed in something after a great deal of difficulty
pull to pieces	separate something into pieces
pull together	cooperate
put all one's eggs in one basket	risk everything on a single enterprise
put in a nutshell	express in a very concise term
put on a long face	look serious or dismal
put one's back into something	work at something with all one's energy

IDIOM	MEANING
put one's best foot forward	do one's best
put one's foot down	state one's opinion firmly
put one's foot in it	get into trouble
put one's hand to	begin a task earnestly
put one's nose in	be unduly meddlesome
put one's nose out of joint	upset someone by spoiling his plans
put one's shoulder to the wheel	work hard in order to succeed
put someone's back up	make someone angry
put something into one's head	suggest to someone
put something out of one's head	make one forget
put the cart before the horse	do things the wrong way round
put words in someone's mouth	interpret what someone has said in a wrong way
Pyrrhic victory	a victory that is as costly as defeat
R	
rain cats and dogs	rain very heavily
raise Cain	make a lot of trouble
read between the lines	look for the hidden meaning
read someone the riot act	give someone a very severe warning
receive with open arms	welcome cordially
red flag	the symbol of revolution
red tape	official rules or procedures that seem unnecessary and cause much delay
red-letter day	a memorable / important day
rest on one's laurels	retire from active life and rely on past achievements
ride roughshod over someone	act in total disregard of someone's feelings

IDIOM	MEANING
ring the changes	be continually making alterations
rise to the occasion	show that one is able to deal with a difficult situation successfully
rob Peter to pay Paul	take what belongs to a person and pay it to another
rough and ready	hastily prepared
rough and tumble	fighting between children
rough it	put up with much difficulties and live simply
rude awakening	sudden realisation (of something unpleasant)
rule of thumb	a principle based on experience
run dead heat	a race in which the contestants are equally matched
run in the blood	have an inherited quality
run the gauntlet	bear with a series of problems
run with the hare and hunt with the hounds	act treacherously
S	
sail near the wind	take the risk that brings disaster
sail under false colours	attempt to deceive
save for a rainy day	save for the time when one needs money
save one's face	save oneself from shame
save one's own skin	avoid being hurt
see daylight	begin to understand
see eye to eye	agree with
see red	lose control of one's temper
see the light	understand
See which way the cat jumps.	See how things turn out before deciding on the course of action.
see with half an eye	see easily
send someone to Coventry	boycott someone
set by the ears	incite quarrels
set foot on	step on
set forth	start on a journey

IDIOM	MEANING
set off on the wrong foot	make a mistake since the beginning
set one's face against	oppose strongly
set someone by the ears	cause people to quarrel
set the Thames on fire	do something sensational
shake hands with someone	greet by shaking the hand of someone
shake one's head	show opposition
shed crocodile tears	shed false tears
show a clean pair of heels	run faster than others in a race
show one's face	let oneself be seen
show one's teeth	take up a threatening attitude
show one's true colours	reveal one's true intention by no longer pretending
show the cloven hoof	reveal one's evil intention
show the white feather	show sign of cowardice
sink or swim	no matter what
sit on the fence	remain neutral
smack one's lips	show pleasure
smell a rat	suspect that something is wrong
smite hip and thigh	beat nonstop
Someone's bark is worse than his bite.	Someone's actions are not as bad as his threats.
sow the seeds of something	do something that will result in something else happening in the future
spick and span	very clean
spin a yarn	tell a story
split hairs	dispute over trifles
spoil the ship for a hap'orth of tar	ruin something extremely valuable by failure to spend a trifling sum or make a little effort
spread like wildfire	circulate (of news) with astonishing speed
square the circle	attempt something impossible
stand on one's own feet	be independent

IDIOM	MEANING
start from scratch	start from the very beginning
stay aloof	keep to oneself without mixing with others
steal a march on	go beforehand
step into dead men's shoes	come into inheritance
step into someone's shoes	fill someone's position
stick one's neck out	take a risk
strain at gnats and swallow camels	be over particular in small things and lax in more important matters
strike a false note	do or say something that causes one to lose sympathy or approval
strike the right note	speak or do something in such a way that one wins the approval of the listener

T

take a back seat	assume an unimportant role
take a leaf out of someone's book	imitate someone
take French leave	be absent from work without permission
take heart	be filled with hope
take in hand	take charge of
take into account	consider
take it into one's head to do something	decide to do something suddenly
take it out on someone	relieve one's anger or frustration by blaming or attacking someone else
take pot luck	share in a meal not specially prepared for guests
take someone in hand	discipline someone
take someone's breath away	startle or surprise someone
take someone's measure	form an estimate of someone's character
take something at face value	accept something based on its appearance without studying it closely

IDIOM	MEANING
take something into one's head	come to believe something
take stock of	survey
take the bit between one's teeth	get out of control
take the bull by the horns	meet dangers boldly
take the cake	be the best or the worst of the lot
take the chair	preside at a meeting
take the law into one's hands	attempt a revenge without recourse to the law courts
take the wind out of one's sails	frustrate someone by saying something that he is not expecting
take the words out of someone's mouth	anticipate someone's words
take to heart	feel troubled about something
take to one's bed	have to be confined to bed as a result of sickness
take to one's heels	run off at great speed
take up arms	fight against someone
take up the cudgels for someone	fight for someone
take up the gauntlet	accept the challenge
take up the reins	assume command
take with a grain of salt	accept with doubt or misgiving
talk behind one's back	talk about someone without his knowing
talk nineteen to the dozen	talk rapidly and continuously
talk someone's head off	scold someone severely
talk through one's hat	talk foolishly
Tell it to the Marines!	said when you hear an incredible story
the apple of one's eye	a favoured person
the best of both worlds	advantage from both sides
The coast is clear.	The danger is past.

IDIOM	MEANING
The darkest hour is just before the dawn.	Relief is often just around the corner when things appear at its worst.
the fairer sex	women
The game is not worth the candle.	The undertaking is not worth the trouble.
The game is up.	used to tell someone that you know what his secret plan is and he cannot do it anymore
the ins and outs	the full details
the laws of the Medes and Persians	unalterable laws
the lion's share	the largest part of something
the long and short of it	the main thing to be said
the salt of the earth	the best people
the thin end of the wedge	the beginning of a harmful development
thespian art	the art of tragedy
thick-skinned	being not sensitive
Those who live in glass houses should not throw stones.	People who do not live blameless lives should not find fault with others.
through thick and thin	in all kinds of condition
throw cold water on something	discourage
throw down the gauntlet	challenge someone
throw dust in someone's eyes	try to mislead someone
throw in the sponge / towel	admit defeat
throw light on something	explain something
thumbnail sketch	a short description mentioning only the main facts
tyed to apron strings	completely under a woman's control
to one's face	openly

IDIOM	MEANING
to the bone	completely
to the letter	exactly
to the point	appropriate
toe the mark	meet one's responsibilities
tooth and nail	using all energy
touch a raw nerve	wound someone's feelings
true to one's salt	faithful to one's employer
try one's hand at	try out something for the first time
turn a deaf ear to something	deliberately ignore
turn on one's heel	leave
turn one's back on	abandon
turn one's nose up	show contempt
turn over a new leaf	change one's life or conduct for the better
turn tail	run away
turn the tables	reverse the condition
turn turtle	overturn
twist someone around one's little finger	dominate someone

U

unable to see the wood for the trees	unable to get a clear view of the whole because of too many details
under one's nose	right there
under someone's thumb	under the control of someone
under the same roof	in the same building
Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown.	Rulers and other people in authority have no easy time as responsibilities weigh heavily upon them.
up and coming	likely to succeed
up in arms	very angry
up to the ears	overwhelmed

IDIOM	MEANING
up to the eyes	deeply involved in
up to the mark	up to a certain standard
ups and downs	good times and bad times
up-to-date	modern
W	
walk of life	profession
wash one's dirty linen in public	discuss disagreeable private matters in the presence of others
wash one's hands of	take no further share in
waste one's breath	talk in vain
weak in the head	not very intelligent
weigh anchor	be about to sail
What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander.	The conditions are the same for all parties concerned.
Where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise.	We should not try to educate people who are happy to remain in their state of ignorance.
where the shoe pinches	where the trouble lies
will not make old bones	will not live long
win hands down	win easily
win the day	be victorious
wire-pulling	the act of using dishonest method to reach a goal
with a high hand	in a dictatorial manner
with one voice	unanimously
within earshot	within hearing distance
without end	everlasting
Y	
yellow press	newspapers which publish sensational and unscrupulous stories
yield the palm to someone	admit defeat