

**a dime's worth**

an insignificant amount

*At best, he'll make a dime's worth of difference with his interference in the affair.*

**a fool and his money are soon parted**

this means that stupid people spend money without thinking about it enough.

**a life-saver**

This phrase is used to refer to something or someone that saves a person in a difficult situation or critical moment.

**a little bird told me**

said when you don't want reveal the source of your information.

**a roof over your head**

a place to live.

*He was so poor that he didn't have a roof over his head.*

**a whole new ball game**

a completely different situation.

*He has written so many short stories but writing a novel is a whole new ball game.*

**above suspicion**

This phrase is used to describe a person who is honest enough that no one would suspect.

*That guy is a peaceful man; he is above suspicion.*

**above the law**

Not subject to the law, exempt from the laws that apply to everyone else.

*Nobody is above the law.*

**act one's age**

To be mature and not childish.

*Stop being childish and act your age.*

**add fuel to the fire**

(also add fuel to the flames) to make a problem worse; to say or do something that makes a bad situation worse.

*Don't add fuel to the fire by laughing at him. He is furious about what you have already done*

**ahead of one's time**

in advance of concurrent commonly accepted ideas; showing characteristics of changes yet to be; present in one's work before later advances in the field.

*With his new scientific discoveries, he was ahead of his time.*

**alive and kicking**

(also be alive and well) to continue to be well, healthy or successful.

1. *Don't worry about your grandfather; he is alive and kicking.*

2. *Classical music is still alive and kicking among youngsters*

**all that glitters is not gold**

appearance is sometimes misleading. Things that appear valuable or worthwhile might not be as good as they look.

*The house looks beautiful from the outside but the inside part of the house looks terrible; all that glitters is not gold.*

**all walks of life**

Occupations, roles, social class, or lifestyle.

*Those who attended the wedding represented all walks of life.*

**an arm and a leg**

a lot of money.

*These glasses cost me an arm and a leg.*

**an eye for an eye**

(also, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.) said to suggest that punishment should equal the crime. At the root of this principle is that one of the purposes of the law is to provide equitable retribution for an offended party.

*In some countries, justice operates on the principle of an eye for an eye. That is, if you kill someone, you deserve to die.*

**apple of somebody's eye**

said about someone whom you love the most and you are very proud of.

*His son is the apple of his eye.*

**as blind as a bat**

If someone is *as blind as a bat*, they are nearly or completely blind or they are unwilling to recognize problems or bad things.

1. *Without her glasses, she is as blind as a bat.*

2. *He is as blind as a bat when it comes to his wife's shameful behavior*

**as gentle as a lamb**

Said about kind, innocent, mild-mannered people.

*She is as gentle as a lamb. That's why everybody likes her.*

**as ugly as sin**

If something is *as ugly as sin*, it is very ugly.

*Jesus Christ! The dress she is wearing is as ugly as sin.*

**be a chicken**

be a coward.

*Don't be a chicken. Talk to her about your love for her.*

**be in deep water**

to be in serious trouble.

*The government is in deep water because of its plans for tax increases.*

**be in somebody's shoes**

to be in the situation that another person is in.

*I wouldn't like to be in Nancy's shoes. She'll have a lot of problems with her boss.*

**be like a fish out of water**

to feel uncomfortable in a situation

*After her divorce, she was like a fish out of water.*

**bear fruit**

The phrase *bear fruit* means to yield successful results.

*He thinks his new plan will undoubtedly bear fruit.*

**beat around the bush**

To treat a topic, without mentioning its main points, often intentionally, because the topic is difficult or unpleasant.

*Stop beating around the bush and tell me what the the problem is!*

**beats me**

(As if it beats me) I don't know; I have no idea.

*Mickael: What's the longest river in the world?*

*Alan: Beats me!*

**behind bars**

in jail or prison.

*That guy over there has been behind bars for five years.*

**behind closed doors**

in private; in one's private life.

*What you do with your partners behind closed doors is none of my business.*

**behind one's back**

In one's absence

*He was talking nonsense on my back when I arrived.*

**big deal**

Something very important, difficult, or of concern.

*It's no big deal if you don't finish.*

**big mouth**

said about someone who tends to say things which are meant to be kept secret.

*He is such a big mouth. He told them every thing.*

**bite your lip**

to make an effort not to react to something.

*He didn't like the management of the business but he had to bite his lip.*

**black and blue**

covered in bruises

*He was black and blue the day after the accident*

**black sheep**

A disreputable member of a family or a group.

*They say he's the black sheep of the Bakers.*

**black-and-white**

said when you have a simplistic opinion about situations while they are in fact more complicated.

*I think terrorism isn't a black-and-white issue.*

**blessing in disguise**

a blessing in disguise is said when a misfortune has some unexpected benefits

*His failure to pass the exam was a blessing in disguise. This made him realize the importance of hard work.*

**blood is thicker than water**

family relations are more important than all other relationships.

*Even if Nancy and her brother often argue, they always forgive each other. Blood is thicker than water.*

**by the name of**

called.

*I met a doctor by the name of John.*

**by the numbers**

If you do something by the numbers, you are doing it in a strict, mechanical way, without using your imagination or creativity.

*His work is done by the numbers. There is nothing original about it!*

**call it a day**

to stop working for the rest of the day.

*Why don't we call it a day? I'm really tired.*

**call someone names**

to call someone by unpleasant, abusive or insulting names.

*because he called his teacher names, Bill was punished.*

**call the shots**

If you **call the shots** you are in charge. You decide on the course of action and take the initiative.

*This is my wedding party; I will call the shots.*

**calm before the storm**

the calm before the storm is an unusual or false quiet period before a period of upheaval.

*The negotiation between the two parties may be peaceful now. But don't be misled! This is only the calm before the storm.*

**carrot and stick**

an offer involving a reward countered by the threat of punishment.

*The president took a carrot and stick approach to the protests against his new laws.*

**cash cow**

This idiom refers to someone or something that generates a steady return of profits; a moneymaker.

*1. The typewriters production which had been their cash cow for so many years witnessed a collapse of sales.*

*2. The young actress turned out to be the cash cow for most Hollywood studios.*

**castles in the air**

Plans that are unlikely to happen.

*Before you start building castles in the air, just think how much all this is likely to cost.*

**cat got your tongue**

Why aren't you speaking?

*Tell us about the trip. What happened? What's the matter? A cat got your tongue!*

**chicken out**

To refuse to do something because of fear.

*He chickened out just at the time they were taking him to operating theatre.*

**chicken-hearted**

not brave.

*They are just chicken-hearted boys. They can't defend themselves from any attacks.*

**dance with death**

try to do something that involves a lot of risks.

---

*He danced with death when he tried to negotiate a deal with that dangerous criminal.*

---

**darken someone's door**

To darken someone's door means to be an unwelcome visitor.

---

*Never darken my door again!*

**dead and buried**

No longer in use or under consideration, irrelevant, forgotten.

---

*All past animosities are dead and buried now.*

**dead duck**

said about someone or something that is is doomed to failure or death.

---

*Due to enough unfavorable intelligence about the enemy, the attack they were intending to launch was a dead duck right from the start.*

**dead loss**

something described as a dead loss is absolutely unsuccessful or useless (a complete failure)

---

*When it comes to math, my sister is a dead loss.*

**dead meat**

Someone in danger of death or severe punishment.

---

*You'll be dead meat if you go on treating these poor people like that.*

**dead right**

If someone is **dead right**, it means that they are absolutely correct.

---

*Nancy: His wife is really beautiful.*

*Lacy: you're dead right!*

**dead wood**

Workers no longer contributing to an organization.

---

*There's a lot of dead wood in this company.*

---

**devil of a time**

If you have a **devil of a time**, you have a very difficult time.

---

*Before she divorced, Ann had had a devil of a time with my her husband.*

**dirty work**

(also do the dirty work) unpleasant work or dishonest action.

---

*1. I don't know but I feel there is some dirty work going on in this company.*

*2. I always have to do the dirty work. I never have fun.*

---

**do the dirty work**

The phrase **do the dirty work** means to do the disagreeable, illegal or dishonest things.

*He always sends his assistant to do his dirty work.*

**do the trick**

said about something that works.

*Some lemon juice should do the trick to make this sauce more delicious.*

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**dog's age**

The idiom **dog's age** refers to a long period of time.

*Hi Jane! It's been a dog's age since we last met.*

**dog's life**

a miserable, unhappy existence.

*I have to work everyday from dawn to sunset and come back home to take care of the children. It's really a dog's life.*

**dog-eat-dog**

said about a world where people do anything to be successful.

*It's disheartening to know that we are living in a dog-eat-dog world.*

**dogs are barking**

If your **dogs are barking**, this means that your feet are hurting.

*My dogs are barking because I walked ten miles.*

**don't get me wrong**

an expression said when you fear someone does not understand what you say.

*Don't get me wrong but I think your plan may not work.*

**double-edged sword**

A benefit that carries some significant but non-obvious cost or risk.

*Being a genius child is a double-edged sword because you cannot communicate with ordinary children.*

**drag one's feet**

To procrastinate, put off; to dawdle, avoid, or make progress slowly and reluctantly.

*He's been dragging his feet about doing his homework.*

**draw fire**

If you **draw fire**, you attract hostile criticism.

*His new book has drawn fire from many feminists.*

**draw the curtain on / over**

To draw the curtain on or over something means to bring it to an end.

*I think it's time for me to draw the curtain on a long career of teaching.*

**draw the shortest straw**

To be selected to do an undesirable task (by drawing the shortest straw or otherwise).

*I drew the short straw and got stuck doing the whole project alone.*

**dressed up to the nines**

when someone is dressed up to the nines, they are wearing fashionable or formal clothes for a special occasion.

*They were invited to a wedding . That's why, they were dressed up to the nines.*

**drink like a fish**

to drink alcohol excessively.

*Alan really drank like a fish yesterday.*

**drive a hard bargain**

Negotiate forcefully.

*It's gonna be a tough negotiations with them. They drive a hard bargain.*

**drive someone up the wall**

To irritate or annoy someone; to make a person very angry or bored; to infuriate.

*Her persistent nagging drove me up the wall.*

**drop a bombshell**

The phrase **drop a bombshell** refers to an alarming and unexpected announcement.

*His wife dropped a bombshell when she said she loved another man.*

**drop a dime**

to drop a dime means to make a phone call, usually calling the police to inform on or betray someone.

*He went out to drop a dime on John.*

**drop in the bucket**

Something so strong that it doesn't count or doesn't have any importance or significance.

*His contribution was just a drop in the bucket compared to the rest of the team.*

**drop the subject**

to stop discussing a subject.

*Please drop the subject. I don't want to discuss it further.*

**easy come, easy go**

said about something which is easily won or obtained and then soon spent or lost.

*He lost a large amount of money in poker. But that's gambling; easy come, easy go.*

**easy on the ear**

something (music, voice...) pleasant to listen to.

*His music is easy on the ear.*

**easy on the eye**

attractive, pleasant to look at.

*Her paintings are easy on the eye.*

**every cloud has a silver lining**

This expression is used to say that there is always something good even in an unpleasant, difficult or even painful situation.

*You should never feel hopeless. Every cloud has a silver lining, you know*

**every dog has its day**

everyone has a time of success and satisfaction.

*You may become successful in your business someday. Every dog has his day.*

**every man has his price**

The phrase **every man has his price** means that everyone can be bribed if you know how much or what to bribe him or her with.

*"I offered him ten thousand dollars to sign the agreement, but he refused."*

*"Just keep trying! Give him more. You know, every man has his price!"*

**every minute**

describing the whole period that something lasted.

*I enjoyed every minute of the match. It was just fantastic.*

**every trick in the book**

said when you try every possible way to achieve something.

*She's tried every trick in the book to convince him in vain.*

**eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth**

The phrase **eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth** refers to a principle found in Babylonian Law, in the Code of Hammurabi, as well as in monotheist religions - Judaism, Christianity and Islam. According to this principle a person who has injured another person is penalized to a similar degree.

*If he killed the poor woman, he deserves to die. It's as simple as that - an eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth.*

**face the music**

said when someone accepts to confront the unpleasant consequences of one's actions.

*After failing to manage the crisis, the manager had to face the music.*

**fact of life**

Something that cannot be avoided.

*It is a pity that drug abuse has become a fact of life in the Olympic Games.*

**fair-haired boy**

(also blue-eyed boy) a person highly regarded and by someone or a group and treated with special favor

*Before he was fired out, he had been the fair-haired boy of the boss.*

**fair-weather friend**

someone who is your friend only when the times are good.

*Don't rely on him. He's a fair-weather friend.*

**fall for someone**

to fall in love with someone.

*He fell for her because she's so beautiful.*

**fall from grace**

The idiom **fall from grace** refers to a loss of status, respect, or prestige.

The idiom comes from a Christian reference to the transition of the first man and woman from a state of innocent obedience to God to a state of guilty disobedience.

*The politician has fallen from grace and has become very unpopular.*

**fall head over heels for someone**

to be in love with someone very much; hopelessly smitten.

*They fell head over heels in love with each other.*

**fall in love**

to begin feeling attracted to someone and love him or her.

*When Jane and Math met for the first time, they fell madly in love.*

**fall in love with someone**

To come to have feelings of love directed at another person or a thing

*They fell in love with each other from the moment they saw each other.*

**fall on deaf ears**

Of a request, complaint, etc, to be ignored.

---

*Every time I ask him to do something for me, it falls on deaf ears.*

**fall out of love**

to stop being in love with someone.

---

*She fell out of love with him when she knew he had been hiding secrets from her.*

**fall prey to**

(also fall victim to) to become a victim.

---

*When she married him, she fell prey to his greed.*

**father figure**

The phrase **father figure** usually refers to an older man who is respected and who is characterized by power, authority, or strength.

---

*The kids respected him as a father figure.*

**feast for the eyes**

visually pleasing sight.

---

*Look at that painting. It's really a feast for the eyes.*

---

**feel blue**

to feel sad.

---

*She felt blue after her divorce.*

**feel your age**

The phrase **feel your age** means to realize that you are growing old.

---

*I really felt my age at work. All my colleagues looked very young.*

**fight fire with fire**

If you **fight fire with fire**, you use the same methods and tactics that your opponent is using against you.

Shakespeare referred to the same meaning in King John, 1595:

Be stirring as the time; **be fire with fire**;

Threaten the threatener and outface the brow

Of bragging horror

---

*After the competitive offers from rival firms, our company has decided to fight fire with fire and reduce prices.*

**fight like cat and dog**

to argue and fight violently.

---

*Those two children always fight like cat and dog.*

**fine art**

The phrase *fine art* refers to something requiring highly developed techniques and skills.

*They are good at the fine art of web development.*

**fine-tune**

to make small adjustments to something until optimization is achieved

*They need to fine-tune their plan before they start the project.*

**fish for compliments**

To try to induce someone to make a compliment.

*He is fishing for compliments.*

**Food for thought**

Information or knowledge that is worthy of contemplation.

*The ideas developed in this book have certainly given me food for thought.*

**for a song**

very cheaply.

*She bought the house for a song.*

**for all I care**

used to suggest that you don't care.

*You can go to the party alone, for all I care*

**for love nor money**

said when it is difficult to get something or persuade someone.

*You can't get help for love nor money these days.*

**Forbidden fruit**

Illicit pleasure or something desired that cannot be had.

*She has always been his forbidden fruit because she's his teacher.*

**Freudian slip**

The phrase **Freudian slip** (also called **parapraxis**) refers to a mistake in speech that shows what the speaker is truly thinking.

*Jane: He is such a bighead. Have you heard what he has just said?*

*Nancy: Yes, sure. Instead of saying "nobody's perfect," he said, "nobody else is perfect." That's a Freudian slip.*

**gain ground**

to become popular, to make progress, to advance.

*The new product gained ground in a very short time.*

**get a life**

This is an idiom that indicates that someone's life is boring and pointless and that they should make their life more interesting.

---

*Stop complaining! Get a life.*

**get away with something**

The phrase **get away with something** means to do something bad and not get punished for it.

---

*You can't get away with your mischief!*

**get into deep water**

to be in trouble.

---

*He got into deep water when he joined that gang.*

**get off the track**

To start talking about a different topic, instead of talking about the real one.

---

*Instead of discussing the real reasons for their conflicts, they are getting off the track.*

---

**get something off your chest**

To reveal something that is worrying you or making you feel guilty in order to feel relieved.

---

*She felt relieved when she got it off her chest. She had felt guilty for years.*

**get the sack**

to be dismissed from employment.

---

*Because he was always late, he got the sack.*

**give me five**

If you say *give me five*, you want someone to slap your open hand as a greeting or to show joy.

---

*"Give me five!" shouted Alan after he scored a goal.*

**give the kiss of life**

To give the kiss of life means to help a person who has stopped breathing by giving them artificial respiration, that is to say, by blowing into their mouth and pressing their chest.

---

*He saved a victim of an accident by giving him the kiss of life.*

**go against the flow**

to do the opposite of people do and not accept things as they are.

---

*In his last speech, the leader of the opposition went against the flow and declared that reducing taxes will harm the economy.*

**go bananas**

to become very angry.

---

*He went bananas when he heard the news.*

**go in one ear and out the other**

said about something which is heard and then quickly forgotten.

---

*Stop talking to him. Whatever you say to him just goes in one ear and out the other.*

**go steady with someone**

To date one person regularly and exclusively.

---

*Lisa has been going steady with that guy for a year now.*

**go through the roof**

become very angry.

---

*She went through the roof when she realized she had lost everything.*

**go with the flow**

To do what people do and accept things as they are.

---

*Don't worry too much! Take it easy and go with the flow!*

**golden age**

Period of prosperity.

---

*The golden age of Hollywood.*

**golden opportunity**

ideal moment to do something.

---

*She missed a golden opportunity to prepare herself for a career as a doctor, when she didn't continue her studies at university.*

**green light**

permission to go ahead with something such as a project.

---

*As a result of the severe drought, the government has given the green light for importing cereals.*

**green with envy**

consumed by envy; envious to the point where it is noticeable to others.

---

*She was green with envy when she saw my new car.*

**green-eyed monster**

envy, jealousy, covetousness

*2. His success aroused the green-eyed monster in his friend.*

**have a card up your sleeve**

to have a secret plan

---

*She still has got something up her sleeve, and it should solve all her problems.*

---

**have big ears**

to be nosy and listen to other people's private conversations.

---

*Speak quietly. Nancy has big ears you.*

---

**have bigger fish to fry**

(also have other fish to fry; have more important fish to fry) to have other things to do; to have more important things to do.

---

*I can't answer your question. I have bigger fish to fry.*

---

**have friends in high places**

to know powerful people.

---

*Don't worry about the problem. I have friends in high places.*

---

**have money to burn**

to be very rich and spend a lot of money on unnecessary things.

---

*He seems to have money to burn. He always buys his girlfriend extravagant things*

---

**have to face the music**

accept or face the unpleasant consequences of one's actions.

---

*Leila didn't manage to finish the job on time and had to face the music.*

---

**head over heels**

completely in love.

---

*They fell head over heels for one another at the very moment they met.*

---

**high time**

If it's **high time** you did something, it is the appropriate time for it.

---

*It's high time you began learning how to drive.*

---

**highway robbery**

This expression is used to refer to a price or a fee that is exorbitantly high.

---

*The price for wine in this restaurant is simply highway robbery*

---

**hit a home run**

to be successful.

---

*They hit a home run with their excellent performance in the new play.*

---

**hit the ceiling**

to become very angry and start shouting.

---

*He hit the ceiling when he knew the truth.*

---

**hit the nail on the head**

said to describe exactly a situation or a problem.

---

*I think you hit the nail on the head when you said that the Smiths lack a sense of cooperation in their family.*

**hit the road**

To begin traveling; to leave a place; to go away.

- 1. We've got a long way to go. Let's hit the road to make it by sunset.*
- 2. It's time for me to hit the road; it is getting late.*

**hit the roof**

to become angry and start shouting.

**hold someone accountable (for something)**

to consider someone responsible for something.

*I hold you accountable for whatever happens to my daughter.*

**home free**

to be certain of being successful because you have finished the most difficult part.

*Once you hand in the last part of your dissertation, you're home free.*

**home truth**

The phrase *home truth* refers to an unpleasant fact about oneself.

It is usually in the plural form: *home truths*.

*It is high time I told him a few home truths.*

**horse of a different color**

(also horse of another color) a different matter.

*If you want to invest in the stock market, it's ok. Gambling, however, is a horse of a different color.*

**Hot potato**

An awkward or delicate problem with which nobody wants to be associated.

*Gun control in the United States has always been a hot potato for politicians.*

**how come?**

used to ask how or why.

*So how come you missed the train?*

**I'll eat my hat**

said to suggest that you will be surprised if something happens.

*If his business becomes successful, I'll eat my hat.*

**ill-gotten gains**

money or other possession gained dishonestly.

*All his ill-gotten gains are hidden somewhere in his bedroom.*

**in a body**

said when a group of people do something together.

---

*The workers went in a body to the boss to ask for higher wages.*

**in a dead heat**

said when two or more competitors finish a race or a competition at exactly the same time or with exactly the same result.

---

*The two horses finished the race in a dead heat.*

**in a fog**

(Also in a haze.)

This idiom is used when someone is confused, dazed, disoriented.

---

*After he heard the bad news, he was in a fog for a moment.*

**In a nutshell**

In summary.

---

*The truth in a nutshell is that I know nothing about what they want me to do in this job.*

**in a split second**

in just very short time.

---

*Every thing was calm. But just in a split second a storm hit the whole region causing a lot of victims.*

**in bad shape**

In bad physical condition.

---

*Bill is in bad shape. He needs to exercise regularly and go on a diet.*

**in name only**

(Also, only in name)

The phrase **in name only** means nominally, not essentially.

---

*They were married only in name; the fact is that they lived in different countries.*

**in someone's pocket**

The phrase to be **in someone's pocket** means to be dependent on someone financially and consequently under their influence.

---

*The committee must surely have been in his pocket.*

**in the air**

said about something that is happening or about to happen.

---

*Everybody in the company know that change is in the air.*

**in the bag**

Certain or extremely likely to occur; assured about the success of something.

---

*Don't worry about the final exam. It's in the bag.*

**in the best of health**

very healthy.

---

*He's in the best health because he exercises regularly and doesn't eat junk food.*

**jack-of-all-trades**

said about someone who is able to do many things.

---

*He can do many jobs; he's really a jack-of-all-trades*

**jangle someones's nerves**

to annoy someone or or make them nervous.

---

*The noise of the kids jangled my nerves.*

**Jekyll and Hyde**

**Jekyll and Hyde** refers to someone having a dual personality, one side of which is good and the other evil.

---

*She's a real Jekyll and Hyde. You never know when she will become unpleasant.*

**join the club**

said as a reply to someone to mean that they are in the same situation.

---

*Nancy: "I've got problems with my husband these days."*

*Alice: "Join the club!"*

**jump on the bandwagon**

To profit from a craze; to join a trend.

---

*After the incredible success of the new product, the company has jumped on the bandwagon, and released a new version of it.*

**Justice is blind**

This expression means that justice is impartial and objective. There is an allusion here to the Greek statue for justice, wearing a blindfold so as not to treat friends differently from strangers, or rich people better than the poor ones.

---

*No matter who you are, you must respect the law. Justice is blind!*

**keep an eye on**

keep an eye on something/someone means to watch or look after something or someone.

---

*Please keep your eye on my son while I go to the toilet.*

**keep body and soul together**

to be able to pay for your food, clothing and somewhere to live.

---

*He earns barely enough to keep body and soul together.*

**keep one's eye open**

(also keep one's eye peeled/skinned) to remain alert and watchful.

---

---

*Please keep your eyes peeled for the children.*

**keep the wolf from the door**

To have enough money to be able to ward off poverty or hunger.

---

*They were really very poor, but they had enough to keep the wolf from the door.*

**keep up the good work**

The phrase **keep up the good work** is used to encourage a person to continue doing the good things they are doing now.

---

*Well done! I couldn't have done it better myself. Keep up the good work.*

**keep your head above water**

be just able to make enough money to survive.

---

*After his financial problems, he can hardly keep his head above water.*

**kick the bucket**

to die.

---

*Sad news! He kicked the bucket.*

**kill time**

To **kill time** means to spend time doing nothing in particular.

---

*He had nothing in particular to do, so he went for a walk downtown to kill time.*

**know something inside and out**

to know something very thoroughly.

---

*He's still new to their system, but he knows databases inside and out and will understand the rest soon.*

**labor of love**

The phrase **labor of love** refers to a work that brings you great pleasure.

---

*John helps street children get basic education as a labor of love.*

**lame duck**

Someone or something that is disabled, helpless, ineffective, or inefficient.

---

*What do you expect from a lame-duck mayor?*

**laugh up your sleeve**

to be secretly amused.

---

*They're very polite in your presence, but you get the feeling they're laughing up their sleeves.*

**law of the jungle**

This expression means survival of the strongest or the fittest.

---

*Some economists think that capitalism is governed by the law of the jungle.*

**law unto oneself**

This idiomatic expression describes a person who behaves in an independent way, ignoring rules and what is generally accepted as correct.

*Leila is a law unto herself; she doesn't want to abide by the rules.*

**lay down the law**

tell people what they should do in a forceful and stern way.

*Please don't lay down the law; we know what we have to do.*

**learn by heart**

(also learn by heart) to memorize something.

*She learned the poem by heart.*

**let sleeping dogs lie**

to leave things as they are to avoid trouble.

*It would be best to let sleeping dogs lie and not discuss the problem any further.*

**let the cat out of the bag**

to reveal a secret, usually accidentally.

*She wasn't supposed to know about it. Someone must have let the cat out of the bag.*

**lick someone's boots**

The phrase *lick someone's boots* means to act in a servile or obsequious way toward someone, especially to gain favor from them.

*Shakespeare used this idiom in the form of lick someone's shoe in The Tempest (3:2) when Caliban wants to serve Stephano rather than Trinculo, offering to lick his shoe*

*She seizes every opportunity to lick the boss's boots.*

**lie like a rug**

To lie like a rug means to tell lies shamelessly.

*She says she didn't kill him, but the detective knows she's lying like a rug.*

**lift the curtain**

To lift the curtain on something means:

1. to start.
2. to make something known or public; disclose.

*1. It's time to raise the curtain, guys. Let's start working.*

*2. The company decided to lift the curtain on their new product.*

**like chalk and cheese**

(Also as chalk and cheese)

When things or people are like **chalk and cheese**, they are different although they are superficially alike.

---

His two sons are like chalk and cheese.

**like mother, like daughter**

This is a proverb which means that daughters resemble their mothers.

---

Like mother, like daughter. Liza's mother is mad about chocolate, too.

**lion's share**

the majority; a large or generous portion.

---

The gang stole a lot of money from the bank. But the lion's share of the money went straight into the leader's pocket.

**lock and load**

The phrase **lock and load** means to prepare for an imminent event.

This idiom comes from military jargon referring to the preparation of a weapon for battle.

---

It's time to lock and load.

**lose your shirt**

to lose all your money as a result of gambling or bad investment.

---

He lost his shirt yesterday in the casino.

**love at first sight**

an instantaneous attraction

---

It was love at first sight when we met.

**love is blind**

The idiom **love is blind** means that a person who is in love can see no faults or imperfections in the person who is loved.

---

A: I can't see why Leila likes Tim. He isn't even good-looking.

B: Love is blind.

**love me, love my dog**

The phrase **love me, love my dog**

means that if you love someone, you must be willing to accept everything about them.

---

Alan decided to get married to Lisa although her brother was a drug dealer. When they started their relationship, she often insisted: "love me, love my dog."

**love nest**

a place where a couple can enjoy each other's company.

---

They rent an apartment which has become their love nest.

**love somebody to death**

To love somebody very much.

---

*He loves her to death.*

**love-hate relationship**

an interpersonal relationship involving simultaneous or alternating emotions of love and hate.

---

*He has a love-hate relationship with his mother.*

**love-hate relationship**

A **love-hate relationship** refers to a relationship that involves both love and hatred.

---

*Nancy has a love-hate relationship with her mother.*

**made of money**

be rich.

---

*She can't have another car. Her husband is not made of money!*

**magic touch**

a special skill to do something very well.

---

*Her magic touch is so obvious in the decoration of her house.*

**magic wand**

a quick and an easy way to solve a problem

---

*The manager warned that he had no magic wand to solve the problem.*

**make a man of someone**

(also make a man out of someone) to make a young person become more experienced or act like an adult and take responsibility.

---

*A couple of years in a foreign country will make a man of him.*

**make a monkey out of**

(also make a fool out of someone) to cause a person, group, or action to appear foolish or inferior; to subject someone or something to ridicule.

---

*Don't make a monkey out of me. You'll regret it.*

**make a pig of oneself**

said about someone who eats too much or too fast.

---

*He made a pig of himself at lunch.*

**make chin music**

talk or chatter.

---

*The boss was furious because he found them sitting there making chin music instead of doing the job.*

---

**make love, not war**

A hippie anti-war slogan encouraging love and peace.

---

*Why don't you stop fighting! Make love not war!*

**make one's way**

To move in a particular direction; advance in life by one's own efforts.

- 
1. *He made his way to the police station and told all about the murder.*
  2. *He had to make his own way in the world as his family was very poor.*

**make waves**

to cause trouble.

---

*Please don't make waves. We're trying to settle all our problems.*

**make yourself at home**

If you say to someone ***make yourself at home***, this means that you ask them to consider themselves as if they were in their own homes.

---

*Alan: Can I get in?*

*John: Yes please, make yourself at home!*

**man cannot live by bread alone**

used to mean that things like poetry, art, music, etc are necessary for people just as food.

---

*People need to read some poetry! Man cannot live by bread alone.*

**man in the street**

(Also, woman in the street)

This idiom is used to describe an ordinary person.

---

*Generally speaking, politicians are rarely concerned with the needs and interests of the man in the street.*

**man of his word**

The idiom ***man of his word*** refers to someone whom you can trust because he keeps his promises and always do what he says.

---

*You can count on me. If I say that I'm going to help you, I will do it. I'm a man of my word.*

**man of means**

Also a woman of means.

The phrase ***a man of means*** refers to someone who is very rich.

---

*What a beautiful car! He must be a man of means.*

**man of straw**

A weak person.

---

*When his wife needed his support, he run away and left her facing all the problems all alone. That is why, she called him a man of straw after all.*

**man's home is his castle**

This idiom suggest tha people are free to do whatever they want to in their own home

*He was furious when they told him not to listen to his favorite music in his own home. He told them that a man's home is his castle.*

**mark my words**

Listen to me; used before a statement one wishes to emphasize.

*Mark my words, this boy is going to become a great poet.*

**marked man**

(Also marked woman)

The idiom **marked man** refers to someone who is singled out as a target for vengeance or attack.

*As a witness to the murder, he knew he was a marked man.*

**marry money**

to marry a rich person.

*She married money and got rich.*

**match made in heaven**

The phrase a **match made in heaven** refers to two people, so well-suited to each other that their marriage is likely to be happy and successful.

The phrase may also refer to a very successful combination of two people or things.

*As soon as they met, they liked each other and decided they should get married. They were really a match made in heaven.*

**matter of time**

The phrase **it is only a matter if time** is used to say that something will certainly happen.

*It is only a matter of time before he resigns.*

**meet one's death**

(Also meet one's end) To die.

*A friend of mine met his death when he got hit by a car.*

**memory like a sieve**

To have a *memory like a sieve* means to have a very poor memory.

*He's got a memory like a sieve*

**men in blue**

The phrase **men in blue** or **boys in blue** refers to the police or policemen.

---

*The men in blue are chasing the drug dealer.*

**misery loves company**

The phrase **misery loves company** means that if someone is miserable, they like others to be miserable too so that they can feel better about themselves.

---

*I see that you got into a lot of trouble, but since your colleague is in trouble too, that makes you feel better. Misery loves company, doesn't it?*

**miss the boat**

To fail to take advantage of an opportunity.

---

*The price discount ended yesterday and I just missed the boat on a great deal.*

**Mister Right**

A perfect, ideal or suitable mate or husband.

---

*She waited for years and years, hoping someday to find Mister Right.*

**moment in the sun**

A brief instance in which an otherwise obscure, unremarkable, or humble person draws attention.

---

*That band got their moment in the sun during the 70s.*

**moment of truth**

A deciding instant; the time when a test determines or makes it apparent whether something will succeed.

---

*This is the moment of truth, answer the questions of the test.*

**money for old rope**

(also be money for jam) Said about a job when it is an easy way of earning money.

---

*Selling ice-cream is money for old rope when it is very hot.*

**money spinner**

a business or product that makes a lot of money for someone.

---

*Internet commerce is becoming a real money-spinner.*

**money talks**

money talks suggest that with money people can get whatever they want.

---

*She got what she wanted. Well you know money talks!*

**music to someone's ears**

Some good news; a spoken expression or a sound which is pleasing; a welcome remark or information.

---

*The kind flattering way he used to talk to her was music to her ears.*

**my way or the highway**

This expression is used to say that people have to do what you say; otherwise, they will have to leave or quit the project.

---

*He has a "My way or the highway" approach to leading his government and his party.*

**name the day**

fix the date of an important event, especially marriage.

---

*Sarah and John are going to name the day soon.*

**necessity is the mother of invention**

This proverb means that when people really need to do something, they will find a way to do it.

---

*When her pen had run out of ink, she used her lipstick to write a short note to her husband who was at work.*

**never mind**

1. it's not important;
  2. do not be concerned (about someone or something, or about doing something)
- 

*1. I'm soory I've lost your book. – Never mind, I don't need it anymore.*

*2. Go and I'll join you later. Never mind about me.*

---

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**next to nothing**

almost; hardly.

---

*Although they paid him next to nothing, he liked the job.*

**nine times out of ten**

almost always.

---

*In this country, nine times out of ten trains come late.*

**nine to five**

said about a job with normal daytime hours, a job that begins at nine o'clock in the morning and finishes at five.

---

*She's tired of working nine to five.*

**no comment**

an "official" refusal to relay any further information, as a response to a newspaper reporter's question.

---

*The district attorney said, "No comment," when the reporter asked if he knew the identity of the criminal.*

**not come cheap**

said about something that is of good quality and is therefore expensive.

---

*Fast cars don't come cheap.*

**not enough room to swing a cat**  
not very much space. Said about a small place.

*Their house was very small. There wasn't enough room to swing a cat.*  
**not for a minute**  
not at all.

*I don't want you to fail in your project. Not for a minute.*  
**not half bad**  
Pretty good; okay; decent.

*It was my first attempt at cooking, but I tried it and it was not half bad.*  
**not have a leg to stand on**  
not have a sound justification, a firm foundation of facts to prove something.

*After the police caught him, he didn't have a leg to stand on to prove his innocence.*  
**not hold water**  
said when an explanation, a reason or an argument is not sound, strong or logical.

*Her reasons just didn't hold water.*  
**not miss a trick**  
said about someone who is extremely alert.

*He was attentive to what the teacher was explaining. He didn't miss a trick.*  
**nothing to sneeze at**  
not bad; decent; acceptable; worthwhile.

*Their music may not be worthy of radio time, but it's nothing to sneeze at.*  
**now or never**  
said when you have to do something right now because you may not get another chance to do it later.

*This is your chance. It's now or never!*  
**oceans of**  
A large amount of something.

*Oceans of guests were at the party.*  
**odds and ends**  
various often worthless small items.

*I have to get rid of a few odds and ends before moving to the new house.*  
**of a certain age**  
Said about people who are not young.

*This shop sells clothes for women of a certain age.*

**of advanced age**

The phrase of **advanced age** or **advanced years** describes someone as old.

---

*The conference is about the effect of advanced age on fertility and pregnancy in women.*

**of age**

Old enough to be considered an adult.

---

*He's of age now, he can buy his own car.*

**off the beaten track**

To a place or places not commonly visited.

---

*His trip was altogether off the beaten track which had never been traversed any European.*

**off the shelf**

ready made for purchase; in a form that is ready to be used.

---

*It is often cheaper to buy off the shelf goods.*

**old wives' tale**

a wrong traditional theory or belief, often about health.

---

*The idea of drinking alcohol to relieve you from flu is an old wives' tale.*

**on all fours**

On all fours mean on one's hands and knees.

---

*He was on all fours, with his daughter on his back.*

**on the face of it**

on the surface.

---

*On the face of it, she seems innocent. But when the police investigated her case, they discovered that she was guilty.*

**on the run**

Fleeing or running from the police.

---

*The murderer is still on the run.*

**on the same wavelength**

thinking in the same pattern or in agreement.

---

*They've done a good job because they were on the same wavelength.*

**on the table**

being discussed or considered.

---

*Everybody agreed to leave the plan to build a new school in our town on the table.*

**on the take**

This idiom is used to describe a person who is in a position of authority and takes or seeks to take bribes or illegal income.

*This is a country where many officials are on the take.*

**on the wagon**

To abstain from drinking any alcoholic drink, usually in the sense of having given it up

*No, thank you! No alcohol for me I am on the wagon.*

**once bitten, twice shy**

If someone is said to be once bitten, twice shy, it means that once someone was hurt by something or someone, they will be afraid to try it again.

*Since Leila broke up with her boyfriend, she has become very cautious about starting any new relationship. Once bitten, twice shy, you know!*

**one's word is law**

The idiom *one's word is law* means that what someone says must be obeyed.

*There's no point trying to do things differently. The manager's word is law around here. Just do what he asks you to do.*

**one-off**

Occurring once; one-time.

*It is a one-off event.*

**out of the blue**

something which is totally unexpected.

*She sent him a letter, out of the blue, telling him that she was in love with another guy.*

**over my dead body**

If you say something will happen over your dead body, you mean that you will not allow it to happen.

*He says he will become our boss. Over my dead body!*

**over my dead body**

Under no circumstances; absolutely not.

*He wants to get all the money for himself. Well, it will be over my dead body!*

**over the hill**

too old to perform as well as before.

*You say you are over the hill, but see how you run as fast as your son!*

**paddle one's own canoe**

To act independently and decide your own fate; to do something by oneself.

*He's been left to paddle his own canoe when he started his business.*

**pain in the neck**

an annoyance.

*The teacher's last assignment is really a pain in the neck.*

**pass the buck**

to blame others for something you should accept responsibility for.

*It's not my fault. Don't try to pass the buck!*

**pass the hat around**

(also pass the hat round) to collect money by asking people or organizations.

*They passed the hat round as they needed money to rebuild the poor neighbors' house.*

**pay dearly**

to suffer because of a particular action.

*If you don't work hard, you will pay dearly for it.*

**pay your dues**

The phrase **pay your dues** means to earn respect or a position by a lot of hard work and sacrifice.

*They want me to resign, but everybody knows that I paid my dues to get this position.*

**picture of (good) health**

in a very healthy condition.

*The doctor told him that he is a picture of good health.*

**picture paints a thousand words**

(also a picture is worth a thousand words) a picture will be far more descriptive of something than words can ever be.

*Just show him the photos and he will understand. You know a picture paints a thousand words.*

**play a joke**

(also play trick) to deceive someone for fun.

*On April fool's day some people play practical jokes on their friends.*

**play ball**

to cooperate and agree to work with others.

*The manager asked him to play ball if he wants things to go well.*

**play cat and mouse**

to tease, confuse or fool someone by trying to trick them into making a mistake so that you have an advantage over them.

*The famous businessman spent his time playing cat and mouse with the judge.*

**poverty is no sin**

The phrase **poverty is no sin** means that we shouldn't condemn people for their poverty.

Another variation of this idiom is **poverty is not a crime**

*It is a pity that the police are chasing those beggars. Poverty is no sin.*

**poverty is not a crime**

(Also poverty is no sin)

This expression is used to mean that it is not a crime to be poor and that we shouldn't condemn people for their poverty.

*I don't know why the police are chasing those poor people out of town. Poverty is not a crime.*

**pressed for time**

If you are **pressed for time**, it means that you are in a hurry.

*I am sorry, I can't talk to you right now; I'm pressed for time.*

**public enemy number one**

The idiom **public enemy number one** refers someone or something that people hate.

*That terrorist is considered public enemy number one.*

**pull in one's horns**

(also draw in one's horn) To become less impassioned, aggressive, or argumentative; to back down from a fight; to yield or capitulate.

*They stopped making investments. They pulled in their horns.*

**pull somebody's leg**

to tease or fool someone when trying to convince them to believe something which is not true as a joke.

*Are you pulling my leg? Is it really your house?*

**Pull the other leg**

used when you do not believe what someone has just said.

*Sue, writing poems? Pull the other leg - she can't even write a correct sentence!*

**pull the plug**

The phrase **pull the plug** means to put an end to an activity, preventing it from continuing.

*They are going to pull the plug on the new TV show because it didn't get any sponsors.*

**puppy love**

A childish or youthful infatuation with another person.

*As they were still very young nobody took their puppy love seriously.*

**push someone's buttons**

(also press someone's buttons) draw a strong emotional reaction from someone, especially anger or sexual arousal.

*Don't push my buttons with your silly comments.*

**put money on somebody or something**

to bet money or to believe that someone will accomplish something or that something will happen.

*He will pass the exam - I'd put money on it.*

**put on a brave face**

to pretend that a problem doesn't bother you.

*He looks calm, but I suspect he's just putting on a brave face.*

**put one's mind to it**

To apply oneself; to exert a directed effort.

*You can do anything, if you put your mind to it.*

**put one's shoulder to the wheel**

to start hard work; to begin to toil.

*Just put your shoulder to the wheel. If you keep working hard, you'll be successful one day!*

**put the cat among the pigeons**

To create a disturbance and cause trouble.

*The principal put the cat among the pigeons when he informed the students that the excursion was cancelled.*

**put words in somebody's mouth**

To attribute to somebody something he or she did not say; to claim inaccurately that somebody said or intended something.

*I hope I'm not putting words in your mouth. Did you just tell me to go home early?*

**put years on**

If something *puts years on somebody*, it makes them look or feel much older.

*His financial problems put years on him.*

**put yourself in someone's shoes**

to see how it feels when you put yourself in someone's place.

*What could I have done to solve the problem? Just put yourself in my shoes.*

**question of time**

(also a matter of time) said about something that will surely happen.

*The criminal will be arrested. It's just a question of time.*

**quote a price**

state in advance the price for...

*The mason quoted a price of 500\$ to fix the roof of my house.*

**rabbit hole**

(From Alice in Wonderland) A way into a bizarre world.

*School's starting up again, time to "Go Down the Rabbit Hole" once more.*

**race against time**

To **race against time** means to hurry to do something before a deadline.

*They had only two days to finish the job, so they had to race against time.*

**rack one's brain**

(also rack one's brains) to think very hard about something.

*I've racked my brain all day long, but I still can't remember where I put the keys.*

**rags to riches**

The phrase **rags-to-riches** refers to any situation in which a person rises from poverty to wealth.

*He was homeless and went on to create the largest and most successful service company in the country. It's really a rags-to-riches story.*

**rain cats and dogs**

to rain heavily. It's raining cats and dogs.

*How come that you are going out in that storm? It's raining cats and dogs.*

**rain or shine**

(also come rain or shine) whatever happens; no matter whether it is rainy or sunny.

*I'll be on time, rain or shine.*

**raise eyebrows**

To cause surprise or mild disapproval.

*The way the children behaved raised a few eyebrows the hosts.*

**raw deal**

said when someone is ill treated.

*Mary got a raw deal. She was innocent, but she had to pay a big fine.*

**red flag**

A sign or signal that something is wrong cue, it is a warning, or alert.

*She considered that playing with her feelings was a red flag. She wouldn't tolerate anyone to do so.*

**red handed**

be discovered in or just after the act of doing something wrong or illegal

*She was caught red-handed, stealing a ring.*

**red ink**

a euphemism for financial loss.

*There is too much red ink in the company's financial statement.*

**red-letter day**

a particularly significant day (personal or sectarian), usually very positive, sometimes very negative.

*Monday was a red letter day for her. She accomplished a lot and had fun doing it.*

**right as rain**

This idiom is used to mean that everything is perfectly fine; all right

1. *Take these medicines and soon, you'll be right as rain.*

2. *She had had a lot of problem with her parents. But as soon as she got married, everything was right as rain for her.*

**right down to**

considering even minor things or people.

*We are all concerned with obeying the law, from the minister down to the common man.*

**right on the button**

to be exactly right.

*Her remarks were right on the button.*

**ripe old age**

Very old age.

*After living to a ripe old age, she died yesterday.*

**road rage**

Aggressive behavior exhibited by drivers in traffic, often as a result of stress.

*Many road accidents are the result of road rage.*

**rough time**

The idiom *rough time* means a hard or bad time.

*It was such a rough time.*

**run for one's life**

To run for your life means to run away to save one's life.

*A lion escaped from the zoo. Run for your life.*

**run out of steam**

If you *run out of steam*, you lose the energy, enthusiasm or interest to continue doing something.

*After having worked for twenty years as the manager of the company, he seems to run out of steam.*

**running battle**

The phrase *running battle* refers to an argument that continues over a long period of time.

*He was fired because he had a running battle with his boss.*

**sacred cow**

anything someone believes in without ever being able to question or criticize.

*He didn't like to discuss the sacred cow of his new religious beliefs.*

**safe and sound**

safe and without injury or damage.

*The kids returned from the excursion safe and sound.*

**sail against the wind**

to work to achieve something that is difficult because most people would oppose it.

*The journalist is sailing against the wind in his attempt to change people's negative attitude towards that politician.*

**sail close to the wind**

when you sail close to the wind you act just within the limits of what is legal or acceptable.

*His business is doing well although he sometimes sail close to the wind.*

**sail through something**

To pass or progress quickly and easily.

*He sailed right through his homework.*

**salt of the earth**

said about someone who is honest and good.

*He is the salt of the earth. He always helps the poor.*

**save face**

To take an action or make a gesture intended to preserve one's reputation or honor.

*They tried to win their last match in the championship just to save face.*

**say your piece**

Tell what you have to say

*Stop annoying us. Say your piece and go.*

**scream bloody murder**

If you **scream bloody murder**, you protest loudly and angrily as if something very serious has happened.

Another variation of the idiom is **yell / cry bloody murder**.

*There is no point in screaming bloody murder about the new law.*

**scream blue murder**

(also shout blue murder or scream bloody murder) to shout or complain loudly because you are annoyed about something.

*Because he didn't get what he wanted, he screamed blue murder.*

**see someone's point**

To understand the meaning that someone is trying to convey.

*Yes, I see your point and I think you are absolutely right.*

**send love to someone**

The idiom **send love to someone** refers to an affectionate greeting or message given to someone.

*Lisa sent her love to all the family.*

**send shivers down one's spine**

To terrify; to make someone feel extremely nervous.

*Hearing that her rapers escaped prison sent shivers down her spine.*

**send shivers down someone's spine**

to terrify; to make someone feel extremely nervous.

*Hearing that the killer escaped prison sent shivers down my spine.*

**send up a trial balloon**

to test public opinion and response to something.

*They had an excellent idea for the project. They sent up a trial balloon but the response was very negative.*

**separate the wheat from the chaff**

to separate things of value from things of no value.

*We got a lot of applicants for the job. But we are trying to separate the wheat from the chaff.*

**serve time**

Saying that someone is serving time means that he is in prison.

*After the gangster had served his time in jail, he got married and found a job.*

**set the ball rolling**

(also start or get the ball rolling) start something, especially a conversation or a social event.

*There was a quiet atmosphere in the party so I decided to set the ball rolling and got up to dance.*

**set the wheels in motion**

to initiate a chain of events necessary to help one achieve a goal (more quickly)

*His contribution to the project will surely set the wheels in motion.*

**shake a leg**

used to tell someone to rouse themselves from sleep and get out of bed.

*Shake a leg or we'll miss the party!*

**shape up or ship out**

To either improve one's behavior or else be required to leave; to either improve one's performance in an activity or else withdraw from that activity completely.

*After his many serious mistakes, the boss warned him that he had to shape up or ship out.*

**she'll be apples**

everything will be all right.

*'What about our trip to the mountain. They say it will snow all night long'*

*'Don't worry. She'll be apples.'*

**shelf life**

The length of time something will last.

*This medicine has a short shelf life.*

**shift gears**

To change what you are doing in a sudden way.

*I'd like to shift gears and start a new job.*

**shoot the works**

to spend all the money you have or to try as much as you can to do something.

*We shot the works on our son's education.*

**shot in the dark**

The phrase refers to a hopeful attempt at something or a wild guess especially when you have no certain information or knowledge about the subject.

*It was just a shot in the dark, but I was right!*

**shoulder to cry on**

said about a person someone to whom you can tell your problems to and then ask for sympathy, emotional support and advice.

*Lacy needs a shoulder to cry on. Her father died yesterday.*

**signed, sealed and delivered**

(Also sealed and delivered)

This expression refers to a document or an agreement which has been officially signed and completed satisfactorily.

---

*John: "Hey, have you finalized the purchase of the estate yet?"*

*Leila: "Yes, I got all the documents... signed, sealed, and delivered!"*

**sing the same tune**

If people sing the same tune, they agree about a subject in public in spite of their disagreement.

Another variation of the same idiom is:

**sing from the same hymnsheet/songsheet**

---

*He wanted his ministers to be singing the same tune before the press conference.*

**sink or swim**

If you are left to *sink or swim*, you are left on your own, without any help, and you have no choice but to fail or succeed. The idiom alludes to the choices available to someone who has fallen into the water.

---

*It's sink or swim for her. It's too late to help her now.*

**sitting duck**

Said about someone or something vulnerable to attack.

---

*Because of his unpopular opinions about foreign policy, he made of himself a sitting duck.*

**skin and bones**

to be underweight and look bad, to be extremely thin.

---

*Because of her illness she was nothing but skin and bones.*

**skin someone alive**

to punish someone severely.

---

*My parents will skin me alive if they see my grades.*

**slice of life**

The phrase *slice of life* refers to a realistic representation of everyday experience in art and entertainment (e.g. a movie, play, book..)

---

*The movie is a slice of life about the life of a group of students.*

**sour as vinegar**

The phrase *sour as vinegar* very sour and disagreeable.

---

1. *This cheese is sour as vinegar.*
2. *Mike is sour as vinegar this morning.*

**speak of the devil**

The phrase ***speak of the devil*** is the short form of the idiom ***speak of the devil and he shall appear***. It is used about someone who appears unexpectedly while being talked about.

*Speak of the Devil! look who's coming.*

**spill the beans**

to reveal a secret.

*Why did you spill the beans about our new project? It was supposed to be top secret.*

**spring chicken**

To be old; not young anymore.

*She is not a spring chicken. She wouldn't like to go partying with us.*

**stage whisper**

If you say something in ***a stage whisper***, you say it in a loud whisper with the intention of being overheard.

*She told him in a stage whisper, "I am fed up with your behavior"*

**stand the test of time**

If something ***stands the test of time***, it lasts for a long time.

*Their marriage has stood the test of time.*

**state of the art**

The phrase ***state of the art*** refers to something that reflects the highest level of development, something that is very up-to-date.

*This car reflects the state of the art in automobile industry.*

**step into somebody's shoes**

to take over someone's place or job.

*Who do you think will step into Leila's shoes when she leaves?*

**stick to one's guns**

To ***stick to one's guns*** means to refuse to change one's convictions or beliefs.

*His father wanted him to be a lawyer, but he stuck to his guns and followed a career as a writer.*

**stiff upper lip**

One who has a stiff upper lip displays fortitude in the face of adversity, or exercises self-restraint in the expression of emotion.

*He always has a stiff upper lip. He never complains.*

**stool pigeon**

A decoy or an informer, especially one who is a spy for the police.

---

*He was killed by a gangster because he was thought to be a stool pigeon.*

**stop the music**

stop everything.

---

*A: (Entering a room full of people doing various things) Stop the music!*

*B: What?*

*A: I have an important announcement!*

**strapped for cash**

The idiom *strapped for cash* to be short of money.

---

*I'm strapped for cash, can you lend me ten dollars?*

**strike a chord**

If something strikes a chord with you, it reminds you of something, it seems familiar to you or you are interested in it.

---

*That woman struck a chord with me. It seems to me that I had seen her before.*

**sweat blood**

to work very hard.

---

*She sweats blood every day just to bring home the bacon.*

**sweep something under the carpet**

(also sweep something under the rug.) to hide or ignore something.

---

*You've made a terrible mistake. Don't try to sweep it under the carpet!*

**sweep something under the rug**

To hide something because it's embarrassing.

---

*Because many famous people were involved in the affair, everything was swept under the rug.*

**take a dim view of**

to disapprove of something.

---

*My grandfather takes a dim view of the new law.*

**take a stab at**

The phrase *to take a stab at* means to attempt or try.

---

*I know the question is difficult to answer. Yet, I'd like to take a stab at answering it.*

**take for a ride**

To deceive or cheat.

---

*It was only when he discovered that his wallet was gone that he realized they had taken him for a ride.*

**take it or leave it**

said about an offer when you either accept it or reject it completely.

*This is my offer; take it or leave it.*

**take one's hat off to someone**

said when you admire someone for an achievement.

*If she manages to deal with three small children and a full-time job, I'll take my hat off to her.*

**take someone's life**

To kill someone.

*The floods took hundreds of lives.*

**take the bull by the horns**

to deal with a matter in a direct manner, especially to confront a difficulty rather than avoid it.

*He was ready to take the bull by the horns and settle the problem he had with his partners.*

**take to something like a duck to water**

to have a natural ability to do something.

*She took to motherhood like a duck to water.*

**talk nineteen to the dozen**

to speak very quickly.

*I couldn't understand what he was saying because he was talking nineteen to the dozen.*

**talk through one's hat**

to talk nonsense

*He was talking through his hat. I couldn't understand what he was saying.*

**tear your hair out**

said when you are feeling a lot of anxiety over a problem.

*He's been tearing his hair out over his deteriorated relationship with his wife.*

**tender age**

A young age.

*It's easier to learn languages at a tender age.*

**that beats everything**

(or that beats all) expressions of surprise.

*You mean he came very late again last night? Well, that beats everything!*

**that makes two of us**

When you use the phrase "*that makes two of us*" you mean that the same is true for you.

---

*Jane: I just bought a new car.*

*Anna: That makes two of us!*

**the ball is in someone's court**

When the ball is in someone's court they have to take action.

---

*The ball is in your court now. You should decide what you want to do.*

**the battle of the sexes**

The phrase *the battle of the sexes* refers to the conflicts and disagreements between men and women.

---

*Gender equality is meant to end the battle of the sexes.*

**the chill wind of something**

problems, trouble.

---

*World economies are facing the chill wind of the recession.*

**the customer is always right.**

In order to make profit, it is necessary for a business to satisfy customers' wishes and make them happy.

---

*Look at that waiter! He always argues with customers. He doesn't know that the customer is always right.*

**the dismal science**

The phrase *the dismal science* refers to the discipline of economics.

The term drew a contrast with the phrase *gay science* which refers to song and verse writing

---

*He is interested in history and the dismal science.*

**the home straight**

The last part of a difficult work.

---

*It was just such a difficult project to work on, but we are on the home the straight.*

**the home stretch**

The last part of a difficult work.

---

*We are in the home stretch after a year of hard work.*

**the jury is out**

an outcome or decision is still unknown and awaited.

---

*The jury is out as to whether there is life anywhere else in the universe.*

---

**the letter of the law**

This idiom is used when one is obeying the literal interpretation of the law, but not the intent or the spirit of those who wrote the law.

---

*Judges mustn't follow the letter of the law, but its spirit.*

**the long arm of the law**

This idiomatic expression refers to the far-reaching power of the authorities or the police.

---

*Don't try to escape! The long arm of the law will catch you wherever you may go.*

**the men in grey suits**

The phrase **the men in grey suits** refers to the powerful and influential men in business or politics.

A variation of this idiom is:

**the men in suits**

*The men in grey suits will decide the future of this nation.*

**the minute (that)**

at the moment when

---

*The minute he saw her, he fell in love.*

**the mother of all**

an extreme example which is the biggest, most impressive, or most important of its kind.

---

*Failure is the mother of all success.*

**the spirit of the law**

When one obeys the spirit of the law but not the letter, one is doing what the authors of the law intended, though not necessarily adhering to the literal wording.

*A judge who adheres to the spirit of the law is concerned with the intent and purpose of the lawmaker.*

**the third degree**

Give someone or get **the third degree** designates a close interrogation.

*I don't know why you always give me the third degree every time I hang out with my friends.*

**them and us**

used when describing disagreements or differences especially between different social groups

---

*There is a them and us situation in the company after the disagreement between the boss and his workers about the working conditions.*

---

**there is honor among thieves**

When you say there is honor among thieves, this means that even among criminals there is honor and that they do not commit crimes against each other.

*The gangsters had a strong respect for their old boss which demonstrate that there is honor among thieves.*

**thick as thieves**

intimate, close-knit.

*Alan and John attended a boarding school together and were thick as thieves.*

**throw in the towel**

(also throw in the sponge) to admit defeat.

*After a long fight agaisnt his enemies, he finally threw the towel.*

**throw your hat into the ring**

(also toss your hat into the ring) to show your intention to enter a competition.

*Nearly a year before the elections, he threw his hat into the ring.*

**thumbnail sketch**

The phrase **thumbnail sketch** refers to a short description or small picture.

*The accountant gave a thumbnail sketch of the financial situation of the company.*

**tighten your belt**

The idiom **tighten your belt** means to try to spend less money or use less resources.

*Going on holiday abroad cost us a lot of money so we're all going to have to tighten our belts.*

**time flies**

The phrase **time flies** means that time passes very quickly especially when you're having fun.

Its Latin origin is **tempus fugit**

*Time flew while they were talking about the old beautiful days.*

**time is money**

a proverb which means that one should not waste time, because one could be using it to earn money.

*I have to wake up and go to work - time is money*

**to a fine art**

The phrase **to a fine art** refers to something done in a way that is based on highly developed skill.

*This company elevates web design to a fine art.*

**to a man**

The idiom *to a man* means without exception.

---

*All the neighbors were present at the meeting and they all, to a man, agreed to help the poor family.*

**to cost an arm and a leg**

(also cost a bomb, the earth, a packet, a small fortune) extremely expensive.

---

*I'd love to buy a Rolls-Royce, but it costs an arm and a leg.*

**to pull the trigger**

1. To fire a gun.
  2. To commit to a course of action.
- 

*Some traders are too afraid to pull the trigger and just watch the market without ever getting involved.*

**to sell wolf tickets**

to make empty threats or promises; to bluff

---

*You're selling wolf tickets.*

**to the last**

until the completion of something or until death.

---

1. *Don't worry I'll support to the last.*
2. *She was a great lady to the last.*

**to this day**

until now.

---

*He disappeared and to this day nobody knows what happened to him.*

**to wash one's hands of**

to absolve oneself of responsibility or future blame for.

---

*I wash my hands of this whole affair.*

**tough love**

A way of helping someone with compassionate use of stringent disciplinary measures. The aim is to attempt to improve their behavior.

---

*The only way help him get rid of his drug-addiction is to adhere to the principle of tough love.*

**traffic jam**

a lot of vehicles causing slow traffic.

---

*We got stuck in a traffic jam for more than an hour.*

**trick of the trade**

a clever skill related to a profession.

---

*He is so skillful. He learned the trick of the trade from his father.*

**turn back the clock**

(also wind back the clock or roll back the clock) figuratively to return in time to an earlier period of history.

*When their relationship had started deteriorating, he told her that they should turn back the clock and just go back to when things were simpler.*

**under a cloud**

to be suspected of something.

*After the murder of the kid, all the relatives were under a cloud of suspicion.*

**under a cloud**

This idiom is used to describe someone who is suspected of having done something wrong.

*After the murder of the old lady, everyone living in the house was under a cloud.*

**under age**

The phrase **under age** means to be too young to be eligible for something.

*This program is not for people under age.*

**under canvas**

The phrase **under canvas**, means to be in a tent.

*The soldiers are under canvas.*

**under construction**

said about something which is being built or fixed.

*The house has been under construction since last month.*

**under one's belt**

The idiom **under your belt** refers to something that you have learned, mastered or achieved and that might be an advantage for you in the future.

*I see that you already have the techniques of drawing under your belt.*

**under one's nose**

1. directly in front of one; clearly visible
2. obvious or apparent.
3. in someone's presence.

*1. I searched for my glasses for twenty minutes, and finally found them right under my nose.*

*2. If we had paid more attention, we would have found that the answer was under our noses the whole time.*

*3. They were stealing his money just under his nose.*

**under one's thumb**

completely controlled by someone; at someone's command.

*She has her husband under her thumb. He would do anything for her.*

**under pressure**

to be facing something in a stressful environment due to a pressure or a deadline.

*They have been under a lot of pressure recently because of the huge work they have been doing.*

**under the influence**

Intoxicated, inebriated, or otherwise stupefied by an ingested mind-altering substance, commonly speaking of alcohol : drunk.

*He was arrested for driving under the influence.*

**under the sun**

In existence.

*If you want to spend your summer holiday, this is the most beautiful place under the sun.*

**under the weather**

Somewhat ill or gloomy.

*A: How have you been?*

*B: I've been under the weather. But it's OK now.*

**under the wire**

At the last minute; before the deadline; barely on time; nearly late.

*He turned his report just under the wire.*

**until one is blue in the face**

(talk/say something/shout until one is blue in the face) pointless efforts while trying to convince someone or change his mind.

*His parents tell him to do his homework until they are blue in the face. In fact, he never does his homework.*

**unwritten law**

The phrase *unwritten law* refers to an accepted rule in spite of its informality.

*It's an unwritten law to take your hat off during the national anthem.*

**up in the air**

uncertain, unsettled.

*The future of the company is still up in the air.*

**up to the minute**

the most modern

*The internet is an excellent source of up to the minute news.*

**up-to-date**

current; recent; the latest

*He uses an up-to-date theory to explain his views.*

**vale of tears**

the world considered as sad and harsh.

*His grandfather left this vale of tears yesterday.*

**vanish into the air**

to disappear.

*The money just vanished into the air. I can't find it anywhere.*

**variety is the spice of life**

frequent changes in one's life makes life interesting.

*They frequently change the furniture of the house because they think that variety is the spice of life.*

**virgin territory**

a territory that hasn't been touched or explored.

*There is no sign of humans in that island. It's a virgin territory.*

**wag one's chin**

to talk.

*Stop wagging your chin and do something.*

**wait and see**

to wait to see what will occur after.

*The new manager hasn't announced his new plan yet. We'll have to wait and see.*

**wait on someone hand and foot**

to serve someone well, satisfying all personal needs.

*She can't take care of herself. She always needs someone to wait on her hand and foot.*

**wake up on the wrong side of bed**

To feel grumpy, irritable; to be easily annoyed.

*She must have woken up on the wrong side of the bed this morning. She didn't stop shouting all day long.*

**walk of life**

an occupation, role, social class, or lifestyle.

*People in this neighbourhood come from different walks of life.*

**walk on air**

very excited or happy.

*He was walking on air after he passed the exam.*

**walk on eggs**

(also walk on thin ice and walk on eggshells) be very carefully.

---

*I was walking on eggs when I told her about the truth.*

**walk on eggshells**

To be overly careful in dealing with a person or situation; to be careful and sensitive, in handling very sensitive matters.

---

*He was walking on eggshells when he was talking to him about his wife.*

**walk the talk**

To do what one said one could do, or would do, not just making empty promises.

---

*If we advise people to take care of the environment, we have to walk the talk.*

**war of nerves**

(Also battle of nerves.)

War of nerves refers to a conflict using psychological techniques rather than direct violence in order to weaken the enemy.

---

*"In the future, war will not merely be one of men and machines, it will be a war of wills and a war of nerves." Sir John Anderson.*

**war of words**

An argument between two people or groups.

---

*The war of words between the two countries hasn't ceased to for a long time.*

**war zone**

The idiom **war zone** refers to an area where war or some extreme violence is taking place.

---

*It is heart breaking to see images of dead or injured children from a war zone.*

**waste breath**

To speak in a manner which is needless or futile; in discussion or argument to make points which are not appreciated or heeded.

---

*Please don't waste your breath asking me ridiculous questions.*

**watch one's mouth**

to be careful about what one says, especially with regard to disrespectful or profane language.

---

*Watch your mouth when you speak to him. He's the boss.*

**watch the clock**

To keep noticing the clock because you are eager to stop what you are doing.

---

*If you are someone who watches the clock, then this job is not for you.*

**watch this space**

an indication that a development will follow.

---

*He has ambitious plans. Watch this space!*

---

**wax and wane**

to increase and decrease.

*His love for politics has waxed and waned over the years.*

**wear the pants**

(also wear the trousers) especially of a woman - to exercise authority or to be the person in charge in a relationship.

*He may seem authoritative, but the truth is that it's his wife who really wears the pants in that relationship.*

**weather permitting**

If the weather is fine.

*Weather permitting, we will be able to go on a picnic tomorrow.*

**weather the storm**

To experience a very difficult situation and survive it.

*They lost everything they had, but somehow they weathered the storm.*

**weekend warrior**

A person who indulges in a sport or pastime on an infrequent basis, usually on weekends when work commitments are not present.

*The most common foot related injury I see for the weekend warrior is heel pain*

**weep buckets**

(also cry buckets) to cry a lot.

*She cried buckets, because that was such a sad event.*

**well-oiled machine**

The phrase **well-oiled machine** refers to something that operates well.

*Their office ran like a well-oiled machine.*

**what beats me**

said when you do not understand a situation or someone's behaviour.

*What beats me is how he passed the exam.*

**when it rains, it pours**

(Also, it never rains but it pours) said when bad things occur in large numbers.

*First, he had a terrible accident. Then, his wife had a heart attack. Really when it rains, it pours.*

**when pigs fly**

If you say when pigs fly you mean that something will never happen.

This phrase is used presumably due to the unlikelihood that pigs will ever evolve wings.

*Sure she'll help us clean the house – when pigs fly.*

**white as a sheet**

(also as white as a sheet) said about someone whose face is very pale because of illness, shock or fear.

---

*Joe looks as white as sheet. He must be very ill.*

**whiter than white**

said about someone who is totally fair and honest.

---

*That little boy is whiter than white. He never does anything wrong.*

**who pays the piper calls the tune**

one who pays for something controls it.

---

*If he pays for everything, he will have power over us all. You know, who pays the piper calls the tune*

**work like a beaver**

(Also work like a mule; work like a horse; work like a slave)

To **work like a beaver** means to work very hard.

---

*You work like a beaver; you need to relax.*

**work like a charm**

If something **works like a charm**, it works works very well.

The phrase contains the word *charm* which means a **magic spell**.

---

*I installed the application on my cell phone and it works like a charm.*

**work your fingers to the bone**

to work extremely hard.

---

*He works his fingers to the bone to help his five children grow up in a healthy environment.*

**worth its weight in gold**

The idiomatic expression **worth its weight in gold** refers to someone or something that is valuable.

When this phrase is applied to a person, the pronoun *its* is replaced by a personal pronoun, such as his or her.

---

*The new manager cut down the company's expenses by 30%. She is really worth her weight in gold.*

**wouldn't be caught dead**

(Also wouldn't be seen dead) Said about something that you would not like to do, or would rather die than do it.

---

*I would not be caught dead in such a miniskirt.*

**yellow journalism**

Journalism which is sensationalistic and of questionable accuracy and taste.

---

*This paper is practising yellow journalism with its reports on sex scandals.*

**you can bet your life**

This idiom is used to mean that you are absolutely certain that something is true or will happen.

---

*You can bet your life they'll get married.*

**you can't please everyone**

making everyone happy is impossible no matter what you do.

---

*When the boss chose Mary as the chief executive of the project, everybody complained. But you can't please everyone!*

**you got me there**

I can't answer your question.

---

*I don't know what to say. You got me there!*

**you name it**

The phrase **you name it** means anything you say or choose or whatever you can think of.

---

*What would you like to eat? Fish, chicken, pizza? You name it, we've got everything here.*

**young at heart**

To be **young at heart** means to have a youthful spirit in spite of being old.

---

*Although he is over 80, he still feels young at heart.*