I'm not a robot

What are idiomatic expressions and examples

Dog days of summer: The hottest, most humid days of summer Don't swear it: Don't worry about it Down in the dumps: Depressed, sad Draw a blank: Be unable to remember something Dressed to the nines: Dressed fashionably Drive a hard bargain: To arrange a transaction so that it benefits oneself Drive someone up the wall: Deeply irritate someone Driving me bananas: Making me feel crazy Each to their own: a way of saying that everyone has different opinions and preferences and that is okay. Example: Even though I don't usually eat spicy food, when I'm in Thailand, I do as the Romans do and enjoy the local cuisine. Meaning: Happening suddenly and unexpectedly. Dressed to the nines The girl is always dressed to the nines. Meaning: Give up or surrender. Meaning: Start something, initiate action. No holds barred: unrestricted or uncontrolled. Example: He always has a chip on his shoulder because he thinks he doesn't get the respect he deserves. Meaning: To approach a problem or task in a new and innovative way, using creative and unconventional thinking. Not cut out for: not suited or qualified for something. Clean bill of health Doctors continue to give all the siblings a clean bill of health. All in a tizzy: Confused or agitated.) All of a sudden: Suddenly, without warning. Example: She's so talented that she wins hands down in every competition she enters. Meaning: A difficult task or situation that requires a lot of effort and persistence to overcome. Meaning: Being undecided about something, or not committing to a particular option or decision. if you want something you have to give up something else. Example: I know things are tough right now, but keep your chin up. Example: He seemed like a friendly neighbor, but he turned out to be a wolf in sheep's clothing when we found out he was stealing from us. Hit the hay: Go to bed Hit the road: To leave Hold your horses: Wait/ calm down I have butterflies in my stomach: You're either in love or nervous I was knocked on my heels: I was surprised Icing on the cake: something that makes a good situation even better. Queer the pitch: to ruin or spoil something. Example: Stop beating around the bush and tell me what you really want. I'll be back in a few minutes. On thin ice: in a risky or precarious situation. Example: I've decided to turn over a new leaf and start exercising regularly. In a rut: in a repetitive or boring situation. Nature of the beast: an inherent quality that cannot be changed. Cool cat That Jefferson is one cool cat. Dip your toe in the water: to try something new or test the waters before fully committing to it. Go under the knife: To have an operation in surgery, often a cosmetic surgery Gone off track: Forgot about your future goal Good things come to those who wait: good things will happen to those who are patient and persistent. Go under the knife The next day, the Winston Cup driver will go under the knife. Meaning: Alert, attentive, and responsive. Idioms are a great way to add color and flavor to your language, whether you're a native speaker or learning English as a second language. Example: I know you don't like your job, but don't throw the baby out with the bathwater. I'm terrible at math. Meeting of the minds Einstein died before this strange meeting of the minds could take place. Meaning: To stay informed about something, especially if it's a developing situation or a potential opportunity. You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink. Nose to the grindstone: working hard and consistently. Fat cat The report criticized boardroom fat cats who award themselves huge pay increases. Example: I have no idea when the project will be finished. Meaning: Think carefully and make a smart decision. Note: In 2017, the AP Stylebook modified its recommended spelling from "flier" to "flyer" for all instances of the word "flyer", except the expression "to take a flier." You can read more about if you should use flyer or flier here. Easier said than done This is easier said than done in white light but it's well worth trying. Nutty as a fruit cake: Someone who is a bit crazy Oddball: A weirdo or a strange person Off one's rocker: Crazy, nuts, insane Off the beaten path: in a less traveled or usual place. Time flies! Meaning: Everyone has their own preferences and opinions. Meaning: Uncertain or undecided. Out of the woods: out of a difficult or dangerous situation. Not in the same league: not as good or competent as someone else. Meaning: Understand the hidden or implied meaning of something. Name in lights: to be very famous or successful. Couch potato You are such a couch potato on weekends. Example: He was about to announce his new invention, but his competitor stole his thunder by announcing a similar product first. "Break a leg" – This is a way to wish someone good luck. Meeting of the minds: Strong instinctive agreement on something Miss the boat: to miss an opportunity or not arrive in time. If I quit my job, I'll lose my income, but if I stay, I'll have to work with a boss who makes my life miserable. Up to par: meeting the expected or required standards. Make a beeline for: to go straight to a specific place or person. Raise the bar: to set a higher standard or expectation. Your guess is as good as mine. Let us know! In the meantime, keep your nose to the grindstone, keep your chin up, and keep practicing those idioms. Example: If you think I can help you with your math homework, you're barking up the wrong tree. Play your cards close to your chest: to keep your plans or intentions secret. Make a clean breast of it: to confess or admit to something. Hit the road He hooked up and hit the road again. Fly by the seat of your pants: to act on impulse or without a plan. We're in the same boat. I think he should take the offer because a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. Example: I put my foot in my mouth when I accidentally insulted her cooking. Example: He said he won the lottery, but I think he's pulling my leg. I'll kill two birds with one stone and do them both in one trip. So, whether you are an English learner looking to improve your language skills or a native speaker looking to expand your vocabulary, this list of idioms can help you understand and use these expressions with confidence. Laughing on the outside, crying on the inside: pretending to be happy but feeling sad or distressed. Example: In order to stay ahead of the competition, we need to start thinking outside the box and come up with new and creative marketing strategies for our business. Example: I've been trying to fix the computer for hours, but I think it's time to throw in the towel and call a professional. Make hay while the sun shines: to make the most of a good opportunity while it is available. Example: She hit the nail on the head when she said that the company needs to focus on its core values in order to grow. Dime a dozen If only cookbooks by chefs really were a dime a dozen. Example: I wanted to buy tickets for the concert, but I waited too long and now they're sold out. Last straw: the final problem or burden that causes someone to break or give up. A dime a dozen – something common or inexpensive. Meaning: Holding a grudge or feeling angry or resentful about something. You can't have your cake and eat it too. Meaning: To have a successful start. Meaning: The complete or full extent of something. Example: Let's shoot the breeze over coffee and catch up. To kill two birds with one stone We always emphasize to kill two birds with one stone. A fish out of water: Someone who is in a situation where they are not comfortable or competent. Let the cat out of the bag: to reveal a secret unintentionally. Meaning: Do something quickly and without hesitation, even if it's painful or difficult. Air rage: Angry behavior inside an airplane Air your dirty laundry: To publicly reveal or discuss private or embarrassing information about someone or something. Not my cup of tea: not something that someone enjoys or is interested in. Against the clock: Working as fast as possible to meet a deadline. All bark and no bite: Someone who talks a lot but doesn't actually do anything. Under wraps: kept secret or hidden. Example: I don't want to discuss that topic. No brainer: an obvious decision or choice. Meaning: Miss an opportunity or chance. I have butterflies in my stomach I had butterflies in my stomach as I went to get my exam results. The Oxford Learner's Dictionary defines an idiom as "a group of words whose meaning is different from the meanings of the individual words." For example, "a piece of cake" means something that is very easy. Make the most of: to use something to the fullest advantage. Related List of Sweet Idioms in EnglishIdiom List from V-Z Vanquish the enemy: to defeat or overcome an opponent. In a pickle: in a difficult or awkward situation. Here are 100 idiomatic expressions and Meaning: A blessing in disguise – something good that isn't recognized at first because it appears to be a problem or a difficulty. It suggests that one should be attentive to any signs or hints of what's happening around them. Better late than never, right? Meaning: A strict policy that does not allow for any exceptions or excuses. Elbow grease: hard physical work or effort. Not all it's cracked up to be: not as good as it is claimed to be. Example: I passed the test by the skin of my teeth. Dead to the world: deeply asleep or unconscious. And, if you want to learn more idioms, you might want to check out: Home » English Expressions » Idioms Idioms are an integral part of any language, and English is no exception. Everyone's cup of tea: something that is enjoyed by everyone or suitable for everyone. Laughing all the way to the bank: being very successful or profitable. Meaning: You shouldn't judge someone or something based on its appearance. Example: I heard on the grapevine that the company is laying off employees next month. I missed the boat. Voice of reason: someone who is rational and provides good advice. Meaning: Feeling uncomfortable or out of place in a new situation. Devil's advocate: someone who takes a contrary position or argues against a belief or proposition just for the sake of an argument. Leaps and bounds: making a lot of progress or improvement. Pull the wool over someone's eyes: to deceive or mislead someone. Example: "I'm on the fence about whether to go to graduate school or start working right away." Meaning: Happening very rarely. Hands are tied: unable to do anything to help or change a situation. Put the cart before the horse You will put the cart before the horse if you emphasize the method at the expense of content. Yarn-spinning: tell a tall tale or story that is not true. Meaning: Make a positive change in behavior or attitude. Use your head: to think before acting. Meaning: To achieve a great success or make a significant accomplishment. Meaning: In the same difficult or challenging situation as someone else. Example: To make a long story short, I missed my flight and had to stay in a hotel overnight. Admit your fault and apologize. Example: He stuck to his guns and refused to compromise on his principles. Green thumb: Grow lush without trying Green with envy: Very jealous Hair of the dog: a drink that is supposed to cure a hangover. Bent out of shape My bicycle wheel has got bent out of shape. Meaning: An issue or problem that everyone is aware of but no one wants to discuss. Example: We need to take the bull by the horns and address the issue before it gets worse. Put your foot in your mouth: to say something inappropriate or embarrassing. Night owl: a person who stays up late and is active at night. Meaning: Take credit for someone else's ideas or accomplishments. Not worth the paper it's written on: not worth considering or valuable. A taste of … This page explains what idiomatic expressions are and provides a comprehensive lists of idioms organized alphabetically and by category, helping you to understand and use them effectively in your own conversations. Example: I'm feeling under the weather today. Example: He let the cat out of the bag and told everyone about the surprise party. Meaning: Get married. A scaredy-cat I happen to be a scaredy-cat. Get your hands dirty: to do practical or hard work. All systems go: Everything is ready to start. Example: People who claim to be professional photographers are a dime a dozen these days. You snooze, you lose. Not playing with a full deck: not being mentally capable or sane. You're no spring chicken yourself, you know. Example: You can't work full-time and travel the world at the same time. Example: She's always on the ball and never misses a deadline. A closed book: To be difficult to know or understand A dark horse: Someone who is not well known but has the potential to be successful. A leopard can't change its spots: People cannot change their basic nature. Meaning: To hope for a positive outcome or good luck. Dime a dozen: Very common and no special value; easily available Dinner and a show: an event or outing that combines a meal with entertainment. On cloud nine He will be on cloud nine when he gets some complimentary words. Example: Our company has a zero-tolerance policy for harassment in the workplace. Example: I'll play devil's advocate and argue against your proposal to make sure we've considered all the possible consequences. I can solve it in no time. Meaning: A fruitless or pointless search or pursuit. A foot in the door: An initial advantage or opportunity that can lead to something more. Meaning: Be completely open and honest about something. Example: Sarah hit a home run with her presentation at the conference, and now she's being promoted to lead the new project. Pie in the sky: Something you hope will happen, but is very likely Piggy bank: a container used to save money. Meaning: To begin a journey, especially by car or other road vehicles. Not the sharpest tool in the shed: not the most intelligent or perceptive person. Have an ace up your sleeve: to have a secret advantage or plan. Add fuel to the fire: To make a situation worse or more intense. Example: Losing my job was a blessing in disguise because it gave me the opportunity to start my own business. Give a cold shoulder: to ignore or be unfriendly to someone. Example: You made a mistake, and now you have to face the music. Meaning: Accepting the consequences of one's actions. It can also mean to make a quick decision without much thought or consideration. Example: I'm going to the grocery store and the post office. Please tell me your story. Falling on deaf ears: not being listened to or paid attention to. Change your tune Does this report mean you are changing your tune? Meaning: Don't risk everything on one opportunity or investment. Nowhere to be found: not able to be located. Get cold feet: to become nervous or hesitant about something. Meaning: A complicated or unpleasant situation that, when opened up, creates additional problems. Next to nothing: almost nothing or a very small amount. Jumping through hoops: doing a lot of hard work or going through a lot of effort. Get over it He'll get over it—young people are amazingly resilient. In the same boat: in a similar situation or experiencing the same difficulties. The early bird gets the worm, after all. Example: Even though I lost my job, every cloud has a silver lining. So, let's dive in and explore the fascinating world of English idioms with these examples: Meaning: Something you already have is more valuable than something you might get in the future. Meaning: Easily win or succeed without much effort. Meaning: Happening very quickly or suddenly. Meaning: Good luck! Example: Break a leg on your big audition tomorrow! Meaning: Working late into the night. Example: I'm not going to worry about the presentation until I have to give it. Fiddle while Rome burns: to be indifferent or do something trivial while something important is happening. Paddle one's own canoe To paddle one's own canoe doesn't necessarily mean denying any external assistance. Meaning: Adapt to the customs and practices of the place you are visiting or living in. Example: Don't jump the gun and start the project before we have all the necessary resources. Put the cart before the horse: To do things out of the proper order Put two and two together: to understand or figure out something from the available information. In a nutshell: in a few words or briefly. A cat has nine lives The modern belief that a cat has nine lives comes from this tradition. Cook the books Fudge the figures; cook the books; falsify the data. I can't even make a scarf. Meaning: A situation where something starts small and then grows larger and larger, similar to how a snowball rolling down a hill gathers more snow and becomes larger. Example: Even though I'm struggling with this project, I can see the light at the end of the tunnel. Meaning: Working hard and diligently. Peas in the pod: People who are close Penny pincher: a person who is very thrifty or cheap. Example: I know I'm late, but I still want to wish you a happy birthday. Just between you and me: said when you want to tell someone something privately. Pop the question: to propose marriage. Meaning: Don't discard something good while trying to get rid of something bad. Example: I hadn't heard from him in years, and then he called me out of the blue. Example: I know you're nervous about starting your new job, but you just need to dive in and do your best. Meaning: A way of asking someone what they are thinking. Like a dog with two tails The old lady was like a dog with two tails when her son and his wife came home from Australia with the grandchildren she ' s never seen before Your heart sinks It's so loud you can't hear your heart sink. Off the cuff: without preparation or thought. Young at heart: Having a youthful outlook, regardless of age Your heart sinks: Feel very unhappy and despondent You're in hot water: you're in trouble or in a difficult situation You're on thin ice: You are in a dangerous or risky situation You've met your match: you've come across someone who is your equal in terms of skill, ability, or determination. Even a cat can look at a king/queen: I have every right to do this Every cloud has a silver lining: there is a positive aspect to every negative situation. Feeling under the weather: not feeling well or sick. Apple of my eye: Someone who is very dear to you. Meaning: To celebrate in a big or lavish way, usually by spending a lot of money. Oddball He has always been an oddball. Example: After losing his job, Dave decided to take a flyer and start his own business, even though he didn't have much experience in the industry. Meaning: What people do is more important than what they say. New kid on the block: a newcomer or someone who is not experienced. No room to swing a cat This bus is too crowded! I have no room to swing a cat! A cat nap We told the men to go home when the rain slacked off and take a cat nap. Meaning: Confront a difficult situation directly and with confidence. Meaning: Doing something immediately without any hesitation. On your high horse Don't get on your high horse with me. Example: Our plans for the weekend are still up in the air. Venture into unknown territory: to try something new and uncertain. Meaning: To make a bad situation even worse. Out of left field: unexpected or unrelated. So, we hope you enjoyed this list of 119 common English idioms with their meanings and examples. Dog days of summer Three dog days of summer, the grass behind the monastery had a large brown. Example: I've given you all the information you need. Take some examples of idioms to understand more what it is. Fat cat: A negative description of a rich and powerful person Feast or famine: a situation that alternates between having too much of something and having too little of it. Up for grabs: available to be taken or won. Meaning: Something that is not one's preference or interest. Red herring: something that distracts or misleads from the main issue. Related Fingers Crossed: Definition, Useful Examples & Synonyms ListIdiom List from G-I Get a leg up: to gain an advantage or opportunity. Neck of the woods: a particular area or location. Example: The company's financial troubles are the elephant in the room that no one wants to acknowledge. Harm's way: in a dangerous or risky situation. Rub the wrong way: to annoy or irritate someone. Example: The design didn't work out, so we had to go back to the drawing board. Meaning: Something that seems bad or unlucky at first but turns out to be good. I need to read between the lines. Hands down: For certain the right answer Hang on a second: Wait for a moment Happy as a clam: very happy or content. Example: The infographic was so helpful, I immediately understood the concept. Take it easy Take it easy. Make a splash: to attract a lot of attention or make an impact. Get out of town I just wanted to open the throttle, get out of town and try to recapture some of that Misano magic. Eat crow: To have to admit that you made a mistake Eat your heart out: to feel jealous or envious of someone or something. Nip and tuck: very close or evenly matched. She's actually very outgoing and friendly. Air rage Cabin crews are reporting up to nine cases of air rage a week. Have stumbled upon: To accidentally discover something Have your head in the clouds: to be unrealistic or not paying attention to the present. Egg on: to encourage or incite someone to do something. Meaning: You can't have everything you want at the same time. Vexed to no end: extremely annoyed or frustrated. Example: I grew up in the same neck of the woods as that famous actor. Do you have your own favorite idiom that isn't included here? Idiom List from S-U Seeing is believing: you need to experience something to truly believe it Sell like hotcakes: to sell quickly or in large quantities Sell oneself short: to underestimate one's own abilities or worth Shake a leg: to hurry up or move quickly Shape up or ship out: to improve one's performance or face being fired Shoot for the moon: to aim for an ambitious goal Shoot the breeze: to have a casual conversation Show one's true colors: to reveal one's true nature or character Sitting on the fence: to remain neutral or indecisive Skin of one's teeth: by a very narrow margin Smart cookie: A person who is very intelligent Smell a rat: to suspect something is wrong Sowing one's wild oats: to engage in youthful misbehavior or recklessness Spill the beans: to reveal a secret Spinning one's wheels: to make no progress Spit it out: Say what you're trying to say Stand on ceremony: to adhere to formal etiquette or protocol Stick in one's craw: to irritate or annoy someone Stick one's nose in: to intrude or interfere where not wanted Stick to one's guns: to remain firm in one's beliefs or actions Still waters run deep: a person who is quiet and unassuming may have hidden depths Straight from the horse's mouth: information received directly from the source Swing for the fences: to make a bold, all-out effort to achieve something Sweating bullets: to be extremely nervous or anxious Swimming against the tide: to act in opposition to the majority or the norm Sweeten the pot: to make an offer more attractive or enticing Take for a ride: to cheat or deceive someone Take it easy: Don't hurry, relax, don't get angry Take it with a grain of salt: to not take something too seriously or to view it with skepticism Take the bull by the horns: to face a problem or challenge head-on Take the cake: to be the best or most impressive of its kind Take the plunge: to take a risk or make a big commitment Take the wind out of one's sails: to dampen or discourage someone's enthusiasm or confidence Talk the talk: to speak confidently or knowledgably about a subject Taste of one's own medicine: to experience something that one has inflicted on others Tears of a clown: to hide one's true emotions behind a facade of cheerfulness The ball is in your court: it's now the other person's turn to act or make a decision The whole nine yards: everything that is possible or needed The writing is on the wall: an indication of an impending event or outcome Third time's the charm: success may be achieved after two previous failures Through the grapevine: The informal spreading, gossip, or rumors Throw in the towel: to give up or quit Throw under the bus: to sacrifice or betray someone for one's own benefit Tie the knot: To get married Tip of the iceberg: only a small portion of something much larger To kill 2 birds with 1 stone: To solve 2 problems at once with 1 action. Break a leg I just wanted to drop you a note to say break a leg and all those other theatrical cliches. Example: Even though she was giving a speech to a large crowd, she was as cool as a cucumber. Let your hair down: to relax and have fun. Give an inch, take a mile: if someone is allowed to have or do something small, they will take advantage and want more. Meaning: Do more than is expected or required. Example: I didn't apply for the scholarship on time. Poke your nose into: to intrude or interfere in something. Actions speak louder than words. Heart is set on: to really want or desire something. Example: I want to learn everything there is to know about photography. Meaning: Don't assume something will happen before it actually does. Up in arms: angry and protesting. No room to swing a cat: Very small, not big enough No skin off my nose: something that does not affect or concern someone. Meaning: To come very close to achieving something but not quite make it. Head over heels: very much in love or infatuated. Slang is usually special words or special meanings of normal words that are known only to a particular group of people. It's a can of worms that we don't need to open. Example: She works two jobs to make ends meet and support her family. Uphill battle: a struggle that is difficult to win. Meaning: Maintain your position or opinion, even in the face of opposition. No love lost: to have no affection or respect for someone. Such idiomatic expressions are often deeply ingrained in the English language and can be challenging for non-native speakers to understand. Meaning: To eat a lot or have a very big appetite. Meaning: Something that is very expensive. Landslide victory: a win by a large margin. Example: James eats like a horse, he can finish an entire pizza by himself. You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours: a reciprocal agreement to help or benefit each other. Meaning: Something that is very common and easy to find. Have a bone to pick: to have a disagreement or complaint to discuss with someone. What Is An Idiom? Example: He spilled the beans and told everyone about the surprise party. Quick on the draw: able to react quickly or make decisions quickly. Needle in a haystack: something that is difficult to find or locate. Meaning: Doing something quickly and without attention to detail, often to save time or money. Push the envelope: to challenge or test the limits. Quit cold turkey: to stop something abruptly and completely. Pull out all the stops: to use all available resources or do everything possible. Meaning: Reveal a secret or confidential information. Example: After weeks of negotiations, the two sides still couldn't agree on a deal, so they went back to square one. On the verge of: close to achieving or experiencing something. Example: I spent hours looking for my lost keys, but it turned out to be a wild goose chase. Meaning: Just barely. Example: The project seems straightforward, but the devil is in the details. Example: This math problem is a piece of cake. Under the gun: under pressure or in a difficult situation. Just the ticket: exactly what is needed or wanted. A closed book I'm afraid physics will always be a closed book to me. Meaning: To have enough money to cover basic expenses. Over the hill/ Old as the hill: Someone who is very old Out of pocket: not available or unable to be reached. Meaning: Assume the best about someone's intentions, even if they seem suspicious. On the spot: to be required to do something immediately or to be placed in an embarrassing or difficult situation. Over the top: excessive or exaggerated. Pillar of the community: a respected and influential member of a community. Paddle one's own canoe: To be able to act independently Paint the town red: to have a wild and fun time. Example: She put her nose to the grindstone and worked late every night to finish the project on time. Example: He always criticizes other people, but when I criticized him, he got a taste of his own medicine. Neck and neck: tied or evenly matched. We can't do anything about the bad weather, so let's enjoy our vacation anyway. Pile it on: to add or do more than necessary. Off the hook: no longer responsible or accountable for something. Making ends meet: having just enough money to pay for basic expenses. On the same page: in agreement or understanding. Put your nose to the grindstone: to work hard and consistently. Just what the doctor ordered: exactly what is needed or wanted. Rome wasn't built in a day: a project or task will take time to complete. Example: As a rule of thumb, I always arrive 15 minutes early to appointments. Crocodile tears They weep crocodile tears for the poor, but are basically happy with things as they are. It was over before we even realized what had happened. Pull your weight: to contribute equally to a group effort. Related What Does The Useful Idiom "On The Same Page" Mean?Idiom List from P-R Packed to the rafters: very crowded or full. It really proved that a picture is worth a thousand words. Example: I always start studying for exams early. Example: I think there's more going on than what she's saying. Not up to snuff: not meeting the required standard or expectations. Back to square one: starting something over from the beginning Baker's dozen: 13 of something Ball is in your court: it is your turn to take action or make a decision Barking up the wrong tree: pursuing the wrong course of action Barrel of laugh: Someone who is very funny Beating around the bush: Not discussing what is important/ procrastinating Bend over backwards: make a lot of effort Bent out of shape: To feel upset or annoyed about something Big task on your hand: Having something important to finish Bite off more than you can chew: take on more than you can handle Bite the bullet: to face something difficult or unpleasant Blow one's stack: To lose one's temper and explode in anger Break a leg: Good luck Bring home the bacon: provide for one's family financially Bull in a china shop: someone who is clumsy or careless and causes damage or destruction Burn the midnight oil: work late into the night Butter someone up: flatter someone in order to get something from them Buy a lemon: To buy something that doesn't work well (usually refers to care) Buy a pig in a poke: purchase something without knowing all the details or facts By the skin of your teeth: barely, narrowly Cakewalk: something that is very easy Calm before the storm: a period of quiet or tranquility before a difficult or tumultuous event Can't stand (something): To dislike something Cast pearls before swine: offer something valuable to someone who does not appreciate it Cat on a hot in roof: Be extremely nervous Cat out of the bag: reveal a secret Chalk up: attribute to Change your tune: Change your opinion about something or someone Chase rainbows: pursue something that is unattainable Cheap as dirt: very inexpensive Chicken out: to back out of something due to fear or lack of courage Chip on your shoulder: a tendency to be angry or resentful over something Chuck a wobbly: To act in an emotional way Clean bill of health: A report or certificate that a person or animal is healthy Close but no cigar: Close but failed at the end Cold shoulder: to ignore or reject someone Cook the books: To change accounts and figures dishonestly, usually to get money Cool as a cucumber: Very calm, not nervous Cool cat: Someone who has the respect of their peers in a young, casual way Couch potato: Someone who lies around and barely moves Cream of the crop: The best of a group of similar things or people Crocodile tears: Fake tears or false sadness Cry crocodile tears: to feign sadness or remorse Cry foul: to protest or complain about something being unfair Cry havoc and let slip the dogs of war: a quote from Shakespeare's play "Julius Caesar," meaning to create chaos and start a war Cry havoc: create chaos or confusion Cry one's eyes out: Cry a lot and for a long time Cry over spilt milk: Complain about something that cannot be changed Cry uncle: give up, admit defeat Cry wolf: to raise a false alarm Cry your eyes out: to be extremely sad Curiosity killed the cat: Being too curious can get you into trouble Curry favor: try to gain favor or support from someone Cut and dry: straightforward, no room for debate Cut the mustard: to meet the required standards or expectations Cut to the chase: get to the point Idiom List from D-F Damp squib: a failure or disappointment. Vicious cycle: a pattern of behavior that repeats itself and causes more harm than good. Put your money where your mouth is: to prove your commitment or belief through action. You can't make an omelet without breaking eggs: you can't achieve a goal without facing some challenges or sacrifices along the way. Perfect storm: a rare and powerful combination of events or factors. Meaning: Something that is very easy. Meaning: I don't know the answer to a question. Meaning: There is something positive in every negative situation. Example: Not only did they cancel my flight, but they also lost my luggage. The deadline is approaching and soon it will be finished. Drive a hard bargain His ability to drive a hard bargain has often brought conflict. Narrow escape: barely avoiding a problem or danger. An arm and a leg: Something that is very expensive. Go out on a limb: to take a risk or do something that may be dangerous. Example: Let's rip off the band-aid and have the difficult conversation we've been avoiding. Example: "It's been a long day, I think I'm going to hit the sack early tonight." Meaning: In trouble or facing negative consequences. In the bag: Will definitely happen In the black: to be financially successful or profitable. Meaning: Being calm and relaxed, even in a stressful situation. Example: Keep your fingers crossed for me, I have a job interview tomorrow. Punch above your weight: to perform or succeed beyond what is expected or typical. And while their meanings may not be immediately obvious, you'll quickly pick them up with practice. A sight for sore eyes: Something or someone that is very welcome or pleasing to see. Passing fancy People must always be clothed, and machines are not a passing fancy – they are here to stay. Example: I'm all ears. English Idioms List List of Idioms in English – Created by Englishstudyonline Idiom List from A-C A blessing in disguise: Seems bad, but is actually good A cat has nine lives: Cats seem to get away with dangerous things A cat nap: A short sleep during the day A chip on your shoulder: A tendency to be easily annoyed or angered, especially over petty issues. Meaning: Have a casual conversation with someone. Meaning: To take a risk or gamble on something. Meaning: Being loyal and supportive, even in difficult or challenging times. Right as rain: in good health or working correctly. He's known for telling tall tales. A dime a dozen: Something that is very common or easy to find. Example: I don't like spicy food, but to each his own. Passing fancy: A temporary interest or attraction Peanut gallery: a group of people who criticize or offer unwanted advice. This is completely different to its literal meaning. A blessing in disguise His illness became a blessing in disguise, when he married his nurse. Meaning: Summarize a story or situation. Example: If you need my help, I'll be there at the drop of a hat. Out of sorts: Slightly ill, not feeling well Out of the frying pan and into the fire: moving from one difficult situation to another. Example: I didn't want to go to the party, but my friends twisted my arm and convinced me to go. Last but not least: used to introduce the final item in a list. Meaning: Avoiding the main topic, not getting to the point. In the bag He reaches in the bag and starts to throw his bread upon the waters. Inside scoop: The details Idiom List from J-L Jumping the gun: to do something too soon or before it is appropriate. This is one of many popular chicken expressions in the English language. Meaning: The most important or problematic aspects of something are often hidden or hard to see. Example: The $5 donation is appreciated, but it's just a drop in the bucket compared to what we need to raise. Start studying regularly and focus on your weak areas. Idioms are phrases or expressions that convey a figurative meaning that differs from the literal meaning of the words used. Meaning: Facing a difficult choice with no good options. Example: I know you're confident about this one stock, but don't put all your eggs in one basket. All in a day's work: Something that is routine or expected. Meaning: A sign of hope or relief after a difficult situation. Under the weather You look a bit under the weather. Example: I don't know what time the concert starts, so I'll just play it by ear and show up when I can. I want to go the whole nine yards. Against all odds: Despite difficulties or challenges. Join the club: to be in the same situation as someone else. Pie in the sky Their plans to set up their own business are just pie in the sky. Meaning: If you miss an opportunity, you may not get another chance. Meaning: Make decisions as you go along, without a plan. Question mark: a person or thing that is uncertain or unknown. New blood: new people or fresh ideas. A drop in the bucket: A very small or unimportant amount. Example: We're all struggling to make ends meet. On the fence I was just sitting on the fence, waiting to see what happened. Nine lives: to have a lot of luck or be able to survive difficult situations. Off the record: not meant to be shared or repeated. Ring a bell: to be familiar or remind someone of something. Mad as a hatter Some purportedly went insane because of the exposure, leading to the expression "mad as a hatter." Draw a blank They drew a blank in their search for the driver. A bad egg A drop in the bucket This business is just a drop in the bucket of what he owns. Diamond in the rough: someone or something with potential or talent that is not yet fully developed or recognized. Hands down He smacked his hands down on his knees. Meaning: A general guideline or rule based on experience. Down in the dumps We can't have you down in the dumps like this. Example: I know you're excited about the job offer, but don't count your chickens before they hatch. End of the road: the end or conclusion of something. I have more time to spend with my family. Out of sorts She's been out of sorts since the birth of her baby. Meaning: Taking the opposite point of view to stimulate a discussion. Meaning: Keep quiet or don't speak. We need to be careful with the specifics. Dead in the water: not making progress or not able to be completed. We haven't decided what to do yet. In the same boat There were a lot of them who were in the same boat. Meaning: It's your turn to take action or make a decision. Under the impression I was under the impression you didn't get on too well. Meaning: Accomplish two tasks at the same time. Rain cats and dogs In the middle of the picnic, it started to rain cats and dogs, and everybody got soaked. Example: I heard that John won the lottery, but I'm taking it with a pinch of salt. Meaning: Time is a valuable resource and should be used wisely to achieve maximum productivity and efficiency. Vying for attention: competing for recognition or acknowledgment. Beating around the bush She snapped, blushing, and impatient with his beating around the bush. Ears are burning: a feeling that someone is talking about you or that you are the topic of conversation. All thumbs: Clumsy, awkward. Quid pro quo: a favor or advantage given in return for something. Curiosity killed the cat Please stop prying into my private life. Let bygones be bygones: to forget about past conflicts or mistakes and move on. Die is cast: a decision has been made and cannot be changed. Example: Sit tight while I go get the car. Goody two shoes: Someone who tries to be perfect Grab the bull by the horns: to confront a problem or challenge directly. Make a mountain out of a molehill: to make a small problem seem much bigger than it is. Top banana He lost a good opportunity to become top banana. Meaning: Referring to a specific area or region. Meaning: Being proactive and starting early can lead to success. These phrases, which cannot be understood literally, add color and nuance to our communication and often have a cultural or historical significance. That really added insult to injury. Example: John already has a job offer, but he is considering waiting for a better one. An idiom is a common word or phrase which means something different from its literal meaning but can be understood because of their popular use. Go back to the drawing board: to start something again because the previous attempt was not successful. Ride shotgun: to sit in the front passenger seat of a vehicle. Smart cookie Monroe herself, of course, was a smart cookie, but she knew enough to play dumb. A feather in your cap: An achievement or accomplishment that is a source of pride. Fifth wheel: an unnecessary or extra person in a group. As fit as a fiddle The next day, the cat was almost as fit as a fiddle, the vet reported. Example: I feel like a fish out of water in this fancy restaurant. Play your cards right: to do something in the most advantageous way. Oxygen thief: a person who takes up more than their share of resources or attention. Example: When we're in the meeting with the boss, just zip your lip and let me do the talking. Example: If we don't find a solution soon, we'll be up the creek without a paddle. Out of the ordinary: unusual or unexpected. On cloud nine: Blissfully happy On the ball: Prepared, alert, competent On the fence: Undecided between two choices On the ropes: in a difficult or disadvantaged position. Hang on a second Hang on a second—I'll just take off my painting things . Meaning: Postpone a meeting or event to a later time. Idioms are not the same thing as slang. Meaning: Feeling ill or unwell. Remember, curiosity killed the cat. Meaning: Time passes quickly. Alive and kicking: Still alive and active. Example: If we're going to work together, we need to put all our cards on the table and discuss our expectations. Example: The new marketing campaign created a snowball effect, with more and more people becoming interested in our product and spreading the word to others. Face like a wet week-end: Look sad and miserable Face the music: to accept the consequences of one's actions. Meaning: Going out of one's way to help someone or accommodate their needs. Example: I don't think he stole my phone. Example: It's getting late, and we need to hit the road if we want to make it to the concert on time. A handful: Someone or something that is difficult to manage or control. Few and far between: not frequent or common. Example: They're finally tying the knot after dating for years. Not miss a beat: to not miss an opportunity or not show any signs of slowing down. I'll give him the benefit of the doubt and look for it before accusing him. Example: He was close but no cigar in the race, he finished in second place. Example: I only see my old college friends once in a blue moon. Through the grapevine I had heard through the grapevine that he was quite critical of what we were doing. Example: It's hard to believe we've been friends for 10 years. I'll cross that bridge when I come to it. Nail on the head: to be exactly right or accurate. Now the ball is in your court. Fair weather friend: a person who is only a friend during good times and not during difficult times. In the heat of the moment: in the midst of a strong emotion or excitement. Example: He promised to help me move, but he never showed up. As fit as a fiddle: To be healthy and physically fit At the drop of a hat: Without hesitation, immediately. On your high horse: Superior or arrogant position Once bitten twice shy: Said when you are frightened to do something again because you had an unpleasant experience doing it the first time Once in a blue moon: very rarely or almost never. Nest egg: a sum of money saved for a specific purpose. Diversify your portfolio. Early bird gets the worm: the person who arrives or takes action early has an advantage. Meaning: Being clumsy or awkward with your hands. However, they are an essential part of English communication, and learning them can help you understand and speak English more fluently. Jekyll and Hyde: a person who has a dual personality, one good and one evil. Idioms are made of normal words that have a special meaning known to almost everyone. Meaning: In a difficult or hopeless situation. Meaning: Experience the same negative treatment you have given to others. Example: I'm caught between a rock and a hard place. All ears: Listening attentively. Example: I hate public speaking, but I'll have to bite the bullet and give the presentation. Meaning: Say something embarrassing or inappropriate. Ace in the hole: A secret advantage or resource that can be used in a pinch. Example: He's in hot water with his boss because he missed a deadline. In hot water: in trouble or in a difficult situation. Meaning: To begin or start something with enthusiasm or without hesitation. From idioms related to personal situations and everyday life to those related to business and sport, this list covers a wide range of expressions that you are likely to encounter in spoken and written English. In this article, we have compiled a list of 119 common English idioms with their meanings and examples of how they can be used in everyday conversation. Get out of town: I don't believe you Get over it: Forget about the past Get up on the wrong side of the bed: Someone that is having a horrible day Get your ducks in a row: to get organized or prepared. Example: If you want to impress your boss, go the extra mile and finish the project ahead of schedule. Example: Our new product launch is off to a flyer with more than 10,000 units sold in the first week itself. I'm used to casual dining. Example: I know he loves action movies, but they're not my cup of tea. On the ball I was lucky to get a bat on the ball there. Example: Use your head and think before you act. Meaning: A picture can convey more information than words. Nutty as a fruit cake London is a bit more of a problem, and you may think that I am a trifled confused, or even as nutty as a fruit cake, since it is New York which is colloquially known as " the Big Apple ". Example: You need to get your act together if you want to pass the exam. However, before we get started it's important to understand what idioms are. Meaning: Be exactly right, hit the target. Meaning: Wait patiently and remain in one place. As easy as pie: Something that is very easy to do. Rule of thumb: a general guideline or principle. I got the minimum passing score. Vested interest: a specific stake or involvement in something. Life is just a bowl of cherries: The life is pleasant and uncomplicated Like a dog with two tails: Extremely happy Idiom List from M-O Mad as a hatter: Mentally ill, psychotic Mad as a hornet: very angry. Example: Getting a new business off the ground is always an uphill battle, but with a good plan and hard work, it can be done. Green with envy He was green with envy when he saw my new Jaguar car. Can I take a rain check and go another time? Rise and shine: to wake up and start the day. Example: You look deep in thought. A clean slate: A new beginning, with no mistakes or errors. Common Idioms in English – Created by Englishstudyonline Idiom Examples Sentences Here is the list of popular idioms with example sentences to help you understand more the meaning of each idiom. Ace up your sleeve: A secret advantage or resource that can be used when needed. You have great coworkers and a good salary. In the know: having insider information or being well-informed. Meaning: Persuade or pressure someone to do something they don't want to do. Fight like cats and dogs As kids, we used to fight like cats and dogs. Meaning: Returning to the beginning, starting over. Example: I'm all thumbs when it comes to knitting. Things will get better. Fight like cat and dog: Continually arguing with each other Fit as a fiddle: in good health. Example: Don't cry over spilled milk. Example: The hotel staff bent over backwards to make sure we had everything we needed. Yearning for: having a strong desire for something Yellow-bellied: refers to a coward or a person who is afraid to take action. Meaning: You can provide someone with an opportunity, but you can't force them to take advantage of it. I think I'm coming down with a cold. Spit it out