

Idiom Examples for Students

Idiom	Meaning	Usage	Sentence Example
Break the ice	To make people feel more comfortable	Social situations	He told a joke to break the ice at the meeting.
Piece of cake	Very easy	General	The test was a piece of cake.
Hit the books	To study hard	Academic	I need to hit the books for my math exam.
Burn the midnight oil	To work late into the night	Academic or work	She burned the midnight oil to finish her essay.
Spill the beans	To reveal a secret	General	He spilled the beans about their surprise party.

On the ball	Alert and competent	General	She's really on the ball when it comes to history.
Raining cats and dogs	Raining very hard	Weather	It's raining cats and dogs; you'll need an umbrella.
The ball is in your court	It's your decision or move now	Decision-making	The ball is in your court now, so make a choice.
Hit the nail on the head	To be exactly right	General	You hit the nail on the head with that explanation.
Pull someone's leg	To jokingly deceive someone	Social	I'm just pulling your leg; it's not true.
Jump on the bandwagon	Join a popular trend	Social or trends	He jumped on the bandwagon and started playing the popular game.
Cost an arm and a leg	Very expensive	Shopping or purchasing	That designer dress costs an arm and a leg.

Bite the bullet	To face a difficult situation courageously	Challenges	She bit the bullet and started her difficult project.
Go the extra mile	To make a special effort	General	He went the extra mile to help his friend move.
Don't cry over spilled milk	Don't dwell on past mistakes	Life lessons	Don't cry over spilled milk; you can retake the test.
The apple doesn't fall far from the tree	Children are similar to their parents	Family	He's good at sports— the apple doesn't fall far from the tree.
Feeling under the weather	Feeling sick	Health	I'm feeling under the weather, so I can't come to school.
Out of the blue	Unexpectedly	General	She called me out of the blue after so many years.
When pigs fly	Something that will never happen	Unlikelihood	He'll clean his room when pigs fly.

Paint the town red	To go out and have a fun time	Social	After exams, let's go paint the town red.
Take it with a grain of salt	Don't take it too seriously	General	Take his advice with a grain of salt; he's not an expert.
A picture is worth a thousand words	An image can tell more than words	General	Instead of describing it, she showed a photo because a picture is worth a thousand words.
Actions speak louder than words	What you do is more important than what you say	General	He always says he'll help but never does; actions speak louder than words.
The ball is in your court	It's your decision or move now	Decision-making	The ball is in your court now, so make a choice.
Bend over backwards	To try very hard to help someone	General	She bends over backwards to make her guests feel at home.

Between a rock and a hard place	In a difficult situation with no easy solutions	Dilemmas	I was between a rock and a hard place with those two options.
Don't judge a book by its cover	Don't form opinions based on appearance alone	Life Lessons	She seemed shy, but you shouldn't judge a book by its cover.
Break a leg	Good luck	Encouragement	You have a test tomorrow? Break a leg!
A chip off the old block	Someone similar to their parents	Family	Like father, like son; he's a chip off the old block.
Cut to the chase	Get to the point	General	Enough small talk, let's cut to the chase.
Don't count your chickens before they hatch	Don't be too confident in future successes	Caution	Wait until you get the job offer; don't count your chickens before they hatch.
Hit the sack	Go to sleep	Daily Routine	It's late; I'm going to hit the sack.

It takes two to tango	Both parties are responsible for a situation	Relationships	It takes two to tango; it wasn't just his fault.
Keep your chin up	Stay positive	Encouragement	It's just a bad day, not a bad life; keep your chin up.
Let the cat out of the bag	Reveal a secret	General	Oops, I let the cat out of the bag about the party.
Miss the boat	Miss an opportunity	Opportunities	Apply early for the job or you'll miss the boat.
No pain, no gain	You have to work hard for rewards	Motivation	You have to study hard; no pain, no gain.
Read between the lines	Find the hidden meaning	Analysis	The letter seemed nice, but reading between the lines, it wasn't.
See eye to eye	To agree	Relationships	They don't see eye to eye on politics.

Steal someone's thunder	Take the attention away from someone	Social	He announced his engagement at her graduation and stole her thunder.
Take it with a pinch of salt	Be skeptical	General	Take the rumors with a pinch of salt; they may not be true.
Through thick and thin	In good times and bad	Loyalty	They've been friends through thick and thin.
Tie the knot	To get married	Relationships	They're going to tie the knot next summer.
Walk on eggshells	To be extremely cautious	General	He's so sensitive; I feel like I have to walk on eggshells around him.
You can't have your cake and eat it too	You can't have it both ways	Decision-making	You can't have good grades without studying; you can't have your cake and eat it too.

A dime a dozen	Something very common	General	Ideas are a dime a dozen, execution is what matters.
An arm and a leg	Very expensive	Finance	This car cost me an arm and a leg.
Bite the bullet	Face a difficult situation courageously	General	It's a tough decision, but you'll have to bite the bullet.
Cry over spilled milk	Worry about things that have already happened	Emotions	There's no use crying over spilled milk; let's move on.
Don't put all your eggs in one basket	Diversify resources or efforts	Finance/Life	Invest in multiple stocks; don't put all your eggs in one basket.
Feel like a million dollars	Feel wonderful	Health/Well-being	After a good night's sleep, I feel like a million dollars.
Get a taste of your own medicine	Experience what you have done to others	Relationships/Karma	He finally got a taste of his own medicine when she stood him up.

Hit the nail on the head	Be exactly right	Accuracy	You hit the nail on the head; that's the perfect explanation.
Jump on the bandwagon	Join a popular trend or activity	Trends/Social	Everyone is doing it, so why not jump on the bandwagon?
Kill two birds with one stone	Accomplish two things with a single action	Efficiency	I'll pick up the dry cleaning when I get groceries—killing two birds with one stone.
Let sleeping dogs lie	Avoid reviving old issues	Relationships	Don't bring up the past; let sleeping dogs lie.
Nip it in the bud	Stop a problem before it gets worse	Problem-solving	Let's nip this issue in the bud before it escalates.
Out of the frying pan into the fire	From bad to worse	Problems/Dilemmas	He quit his job only to realize he was out of the frying pan into the fire.

Put your foot in your mouth	Say something embarrassing or wrong	Social Etiquette	I really put my foot in my mouth during the meeting.
The early bird catches the worm	Opportunities come to those who are early	Opportunity	I got to the sale first and found the best deals; the early bird catches the worm.
The whole nine yards	Everything; all the way	General	I cleaned the house, mowed the lawn—the whole nine yards.
Turn over a new leaf	Make a fresh start	Personal Development	This year, I want to turn over a new leaf and be more organized.
Under the weather	Not feeling well	Health	I can't come to work today; I'm feeling under the weather.
When pigs fly	Something that will never happen	Skepticism	He'll clean his room when pigs fly.
You can't make an omelette	You can't achieve something without sacrifices	Sacrifice/Progress	You have to work late sometimes; you can't make an

without breaking eggs			omelette without breaking eggs.
Zero in on	Focus closely on something	Focus	The company is zeroing in on new markets for expansion.
Hit the hay	Go to sleep	Daily Routine	I'm really tired; I'm going to hit the hay.
Be all ears	Listen attentively	Listening	Tell me about your trip; I'm all ears.
Beat around the bush	Avoid getting to the point	Communication	Stop beating around the bush and tell me what you want.
Best thing since sliced bread	A great invention or innovation	Innovation	This new phone is the best thing since sliced bread.
Go the extra mile	Do more than what is expected	Effort	He always goes the extra mile to make customers happy.

Break the ice	Initiate a conversation or activity	Social	She told a joke to break the ice at the party.
Cool as a cucumber	Very calm and composed	Emotions	Even in a crisis, he remains as cool as a cucumber.
Cut to the chase	Get to the point	Communication	Enough small talk, let's cut to the chase.
Don't count your chickens before they hatch	Don't make plans based on uncertain outcomes	Planning	You haven't won yet; don't count your chickens before they hatch.
Down to earth	Practical and straightforward	Personality	She's very down to earth and easy to talk to.
Drop in the bucket	A very small or insignificant amount	Quantity	That donation is just a drop in the bucket; we need much more.
Hit the books	Study hard	Academics	I need to hit the books for the exam tomorrow.

In a pickle	In a difficult situation	Trouble	I'm in a pickle; I lost my keys!
It's raining cats and dogs	It's raining heavily	Weather	Bring an umbrella; it's raining cats and dogs.
Let the cat out of the bag	Reveal a secret	Secrets	Oops, I let the cat out of the bag about the surprise party.
Over the moon	Extremely happy	Emotions	She was over the moon when she got the promotion.
Pull someone's leg	Joke or tease someone	Humor	Are you pulling my leg, or is this for real?
Spill the beans	Reveal confidential information	Secrets	Don't spill the beans about the new project.
Take it with a grain of salt	Be skeptical about something	Skepticism	Take his advice with a grain of salt; he's not an expert.

The ball is in your court	It's your decision or turn to act	Decision-making	I've done all I can; the ball is in your court now.
Throw in the towel	Give up	Failure/Desperation	After years of trying, he threw in the towel.
Up in the air	Uncertain	Uncertainty	Our plans for the weekend are still up in the air.
Walk on eggshells	Be extremely cautious	Caution	I have to walk on eggshells when I talk to him; he's very sensitive.
You can't judge a book by its cover	Don't judge something or someone based on appearances	Judgement	She seemed shy, but you can't judge a book by its cover.
A penny for your thoughts	Asking someone what they are thinking	Thoughts/Opinions	You've been quiet; a penny for your thoughts?
At the drop of a hat	Immediately; without hesitation	Time	She's always ready to help at the drop of a hat.

Beat a dead horse	Continue to pursue pointless or futile efforts	Effort/Waste	Stop trying to convince him; you're beating a dead horse.
Catch some Z's	Go to sleep	Rest/Sleep	I'm really tired; I'm going to catch some Z's.
Don't cry wolf	Don't give false alarms	Honesty/Trust	If you keep crying wolf, people won't believe you when it's true.
Every cloud has a silver lining	Look for the positive side in difficult situations	Optimism	It's a tough time, but every cloud has a silver lining.
Get a kick out of	To enjoy something a lot	Enjoyment	She gets a kick out of skydiving.
Hold your horses	Wait a moment	Patience	Hold your horses, we can't make that decision yet.
Jump on the bandwagon	Join a popular trend or activity	Trends	Everyone's buying those shoes; let's

			jump on the bandwagon.
Kill two birds with one stone	Achieve two objectives with a single action	Efficiency	By studying English, she can improve her skills and make new friends, killing two birds with one stone.
Leave no stone unturned	Try every possible course of action	Effort	She left no stone unturned in her search for her lost ring.
Make a long story short	Summarize a long story or explanation	Summary	To make a long story short, we missed the flight.
No pain, no gain	You have to work hard for what you want	Hard work	I know this exercise is tough, but no pain, no gain.
Out of the blue	Unexpectedly	Surprise	He showed up out of the blue after years of no contact.

Read between the lines	Understand the hidden meaning	Understanding	Her words were positive, but if you read between the lines, she wasn't happy.
Shoot for the moon	Aim for a high goal	Ambition	You should shoot for the moon and apply for that job.
The whole nine yards	Everything; all of something	Completeness	We have to do a thorough job and go the whole nine yards.
Turn over a new leaf	Make a fresh start	New Beginnings	He decided to turn over a new leaf and quit smoking.
Under the weather	Feeling sick	Sickness	I can't go to the party; I'm feeling under the weather.
When pigs fly	Something that will never happen	Impossibility	He'll clean his room when pigs fly.
You can say that again	Strongly agree with what's been said	Agreement	"This movie is really exciting." "You can say that again!"

A picture is worth a thousand words	An image can tell a story better than words	Communication	Instead of explaining what happened, she showed a photo. A picture is worth a thousand words.
Break a leg	Good luck	Well-wishing	Break a leg on your first day at the new job!
Close but no cigar	Almost, but not quite good enough	Near Success	He was close but no cigar on getting that job offer.
Don't put all your eggs in one basket	Don't risk everything on one venture	Risk Management	Invest in different stocks; don't put all your eggs in one basket.
Easier said than done	Something is easier to talk about than to do	Difficulty	Losing weight is easier said than done.
Fit as a fiddle	In good health	Health	After her recovery, she's now fit as a fiddle.

Go the extra mile	Do more than what is expected	Effort	She always goes the extra mile to make her customers happy.
Hit the nail on the head	Be exactly correct	Accuracy	His analysis hit the nail on the head.
In hot water	In trouble	Trouble	He found himself in hot water with his boss.
Just a stone's throw away	Very close in distance	Proximity	The park is just a stone's throw away from my house.