

Short Idiom Examples

Idiom	Meaning	Usage	Sentence Example
Break a leg	Good luck	Wishing someone luck	"Break a leg on your interview tomorrow!"
Cold feet	Nervousness or doubt	Expressing uncertainty	"He got cold feet before the wedding."
Cost an arm and a leg	Very expensive	Discussing high cost	"That designer bag cost me an arm and a leg."
Cry over spilled milk	Wasting time worrying over past mistakes	Discussing regret	"There's no use crying over spilled milk."
Hit the hay	Go to bed	Saying goodnight	"I'm exhausted; I'm going to hit the hay."

Jump the gun	Act prematurely	Discussing haste	"He jumped the gun and announced it too early."
Bite the bullet	Face a difficult situation bravely	Encouraging courage	"You'll have to bite the bullet and go on."
Call it a day	Finish work	Ending the day	"It's late, let's call it a day."
Cut corners	Do something poorly to save time/money	Discussing shortcuts	"Don't cut corners on this project."
Hit the nail on the head	Be exactly right	Acknowledging accuracy	"You hit the nail on the head with that idea."
A penny for your thoughts	Asking what someone is thinking	Initiating conversation	"You look lost, a penny for your thoughts?"
Against the clock	Rushed or short on time	Discussing time constraints	"We're working against the clock to finish."
All ears	Listening intently	Showing attention	"Tell me the story, I'm all ears."

Ball is in your court	Your turn to take action	Discussing responsibility	"The ball is in your court now."
Beat around the bush	Avoid saying what you mean	Discussing evasiveness	"Stop beating around the bush and say it."
Bend over backwards	Go out of your way to help	Discussing effort	"I bent over backwards to assist you."
Big fish	An important or influential person	Discussing importance	"He's a big fish in the company."
Birds of a feather	Similar people	Discussing similarity	"Birds of a feather flock together."
Break the ice	Make people feel more comfortable	Initiating conversation	"Let's break the ice with a fun game."
Burn the midnight oil	Work late	Discussing hard work	"I had to burn the midnight oil to finish."
By the skin of your teeth	Narrowly succeed	Discussing a close call	"I passed the test by the skin of my teeth."
Call a spade a spade	Speak frankly	Discussing honesty	"Let's call a spade a spade, shall we?"

Cat got your tongue?	Unable to speak	Discussing speechlessness	"Why so quiet, cat got your tongue?"
Chew the fat	Casual conversation	Initiating casual talk	"Let's chew the fat over coffee."
Chip on your shoulder	Holding a grudge	Discussing resentment	"He has a chip on his shoulder."
Cold turkey	To quit abruptly	Discussing quitting	"He quit smoking cold turkey."
Cool as a cucumber	Very calm	Discussing composure	"She was as cool as a cucumber during the crisis."
Couch potato	Lazy person	Discussing laziness	"Don't be a couch potato, go outside."
Cry wolf	Give a false alarm	Discussing false warnings	"If you keep crying wolf, no one will believe you."
Cut to the chase	Get to the point	Discussing directness	"Let's cut to the chase, what's the plan?"
Don't cry over spilled milk	Don't fret about what can't be changed	Discussing regret	"It's done; don't cry over spilled milk."

Down to the wire	At the last possible moment	Discussing time constraints	"It came down to the wire, but we did it."
Drop in the bucket	Insignificant amount	Discussing insignificance	"It's just a drop in the bucket."
Easier said than done	More difficult than it sounds	Discussing difficulty	"Easier said than done, but we'll try."
Eat your heart out	Feel jealous	Discussing envy	"Eat your heart out, I won the award!"
Elbow grease	Hard work	Discussing effort	"It will take some elbow grease to clean this."
Every cloud has a silver lining	Good in every bad situation	Discussing optimism	"Every cloud has a silver lining, remember that."
Eye for an eye	Revenge	Discussing retribution	"He believes in an eye for an eye."
Fair and square	Honest, straightforward	Discussing honesty	"I won the game fair and square."
Fall on deaf ears	Ignored	Discussing being ignored	"My advice fell on deaf ears."

Feather in your cap	An achievement	Discussing success	"That award is a feather in your cap."
Fish out of water	Feel out of place	Discussing discomfort	"I felt like a fish out of water at the party."
Fit as a fiddle	Very healthy	Discussing health	"My grandma is 90 and fit as a fiddle."
Flash in the pan	Brief success	Discussing short-lived success	"His fame was just a flash in the pan."
Fly on the wall	Unnoticed observer	Discussing observation	"I wish I could be a fly on the wall in that meeting."
For the birds	Unimportant	Discussing insignificance	"This meeting is for the birds."
Get a kick out of	Enjoy greatly	Discussing enjoyment	"I get a kick out of watching comedy shows."
Get your act together	Be organized	Discussing organization	"You need to get your act together."
Go with the flow	Be flexible	Discussing adaptability	"Just go with the flow and enjoy the event."

Hit the sack	Go to bed	Discussing rest	"I'm tired, I'm going to hit the sack."
Hold your horses	Be patient	Discussing patience	"Hold your horses, we're almost there."
In the nick of time	Just in time	Discussing time	"He finished the project in the nick of time."
It's not rocket science	It's easy	Discussing simplicity	"Come on, it's not rocket science."
Jump on the bandwagon	Join a popular trend	Discussing trends	"He jumped on the bandwagon and started investing in cryptocurrency."
Keep an eye on	Watch carefully	Discussing vigilance	"Keep an eye on your luggage."
Knock on wood	Hope for good luck	Discussing superstition	"I haven't been sick yet, knock on wood."
Leave no stone unturned	Try every option	Discussing thoroughness	"We'll leave no stone unturned to solve this."

Let the cat out of the bag	Reveal a secret	Discussing secrecy	"He let the cat out of the bag about the surprise party."
Make a long story short	Summarize	Discussing brevity	"To make a long story short, we won."
Nail-biting	Anxiety-inducing	Discussing stress	"It was a nail-biting finish."
Off the hook	Avoid responsibility	Discussing avoidance	"You're not off the hook yet."
Out of the blue	Unexpectedly	Discussing surprise	"She called me out of the blue."
Over the moon	Extremely happy	Discussing happiness	"I was over the moon when I heard the news."
Pass the buck	Shift responsibility	Discussing blame	"Don't pass the buck; own up to your mistakes."
Piece of cake	Easy task	Discussing simplicity	"The test was a piece of cake."
Pull someone's leg	Joke with someone	Discussing humor	"Are you pulling my leg?"

Put all your eggs in one basket	Risk everything on one thing	Discussing risk	"Don't put all your eggs in one basket."
Rain on someone's parade	Ruin someone's plans	Discussing interference	"I hate to rain on your parade, but you can't do that."
Read between the lines	Understand hidden meaning	Discussing interpretation	"If you read between the lines, it's clear."
Rock the boat	Cause trouble	Discussing conflict	"Don't rock the boat; just follow the rules."
Rule of thumb	General guideline	Discussing guidelines	"As a rule of thumb, arrive early."
Run-of-the-mill	Ordinary	Discussing commonality	"It was just a run-of-the-mill performance."
See eye to eye	Agree	Discussing agreement	"We don't see eye to eye on this issue."
Sitting duck	Easy target	Discussing vulnerability	"Without a password, you're a sitting duck online."

Spill the beans	Reveal a secret	Discussing secrets	"She spilled the beans about the engagement."
Take with a grain of salt	Be skeptical	Discussing skepticism	"Take his advice with a grain of salt."
The ball's in your court	Your move	Discussing initiative	"The ball's in your court; make a decision."
Throw in the towel	Give up	Discussing surrender	"I'm so tired, I'm ready to throw in the towel."
Turn a blind eye	Ignore	Discussing ignorance	"They turned a blind eye to the rules."
Under the weather	Feeling ill	Discussing health	"I'm a bit under the weather today."
Up in arms	Angry and protesting	Discussing anger	"The workers were up in arms over the new policy."
Walk on eggshells	Be cautious	Discussing caution	"I have to walk on eggshells around him."

When pigs fly	Never	Discussing impossibility	"He'll clean his room when pigs fly."
X marks the spot	Indicating a location	Discussing location	"X marks the spot where the treasure is buried."
You can't judge a book by its cover	Don't judge based on appearance	Discussing judgment	"You can't judge a book by its cover."
Zero in on	Focus on	Discussing focus	"The police zeroed in on the suspect."
Zip your lip	Keep quiet	Discussing silence	"You better zip your lip before you say something you regret."
Bite the bullet	Face a difficult situation bravely	Discussing bravery	"You have to bite the bullet and take the test."
Cry over spilled milk	Complain about things you can't change	Discussing unchangeable situations	"There's no use crying over spilled milk."

Don't cry wolf	Don't raise false alarms	Discussing reliability	"If you keep crying wolf, nobody will believe you."
Go the extra mile	Do more than required	Discussing effort	"She always goes the extra mile to help her friends."
Hit the nail on the head	Be exactly right	Discussing accuracy	"You hit the nail on the head with that answer."
In the hot seat	Under intense scrutiny	Discussing pressure	"The CEO is in the hot seat after the company scandal."
Jump the gun	Act too soon	Discussing impatience	"Don't jump the gun; wait for the signal."
Keep a stiff upper lip	Remain calm	Discussing composure	"Keep a stiff upper lip during the crisis."
Laugh up one's sleeve	Laugh secretly or to oneself	Discussing secretive amusement	"He was laughing up his sleeve at the confusion he'd caused."

Mind your P's and Q's	Be polite and well-behaved	Discussing politeness	"You should always mind your P's and Q's at a formal event."
No strings attached	Free from conditions or limitations	Discussing freedom	"He offered to help with no strings attached."
On a silver platter	Easily and handed to you	Discussing ease	"He got the job on a silver platter."
Put your foot in it	Say something inappropriate	Discussing social blunders	"She really put her foot in it at the party."
Quiet as a mouse	Extremely quiet	Discussing silence	"He was as quiet as a mouse while sneaking in."
Run out of steam	Lose energy or enthusiasm	Discussing exhaustion	"I ran out of steam towards the end of the marathon."
Spick and span	Very clean	Discussing cleanliness	"The house was spick and span after the cleaning."
Through thick and thin	In both good and bad times	Discussing loyalty	"They've stuck together through thick and thin."

Under one's thumb	Under someone's control	Discussing control	"He's got her under his thumb."
Variety is the spice of life	Changes and new experiences make life exciting	Discussing excitement	"I like to travel; variety is the spice of life."
Walk the talk	Actions speak louder than words	Discussing action	"He says he's a good manager, but can he walk the talk?"
X-factor	A quality that's hard to describe	Discussing indescribable qualities	"She has that X-factor that makes her stand out."
You can't make an omelette without breaking eggs	To accomplish something, sacrifices must be made	Discussing sacrifice	"You can't make an omelette without breaking eggs."
Zero tolerance	No acceptance of a behavior	Discussing strictness	"There is zero tolerance for cheating in the exam."
A penny for your thoughts	Asking what someone is thinking	Discussing thoughts	"A penny for your thoughts?"

Beat around the bush	Avoiding the main point	Discussing evasion	"Stop beating around the bush and get to the point."
Call it a day	Stop working for the day	Discussing end of effort	"Let's call it a day and go home."
Devil's advocate	Arguing against, for the sake of argument	Discussing debate	"I'll play devil's advocate for a moment."
Easier said than done	It's easier to talk than to take action	Discussing difficulty	"Getting into that college is easier said than done."
Full of beans	Energetic	Discussing energy	"The kids were full of beans this morning."
Get the ball rolling	Start something	Discussing initiation	"Let's get the ball rolling on this project."
Hit the books	To study	Discussing studying	"It's time to hit the books for exams."
In the bag	Certain to be won or achieved	Discussing certainty	"The game was in the bag after the third goal."

Jack of all trades	Someone who can do many different jobs	Discussing versatility	"He's a jack of all trades but master of none."
Keep an eye on	Watch carefully	Discussing attention	"Keep an eye on the stove while I'm gone."
Let sleeping dogs lie	Don't bring up old issues	Discussing conflict avoidance	"It's better to let sleeping dogs lie."
Make ends meet	Earn enough to cover expenses	Discussing finances	"He works two jobs to make ends meet."
No pain, no gain	You have to work hard for success	Discussing effort and reward	"You have to train hard; no pain, no gain."
On cloud nine	Extremely happy	Discussing happiness	"I was on cloud nine after hearing the news."
Put on the back burner	Delay	Discussing postponement	"We'll have to put that project on the back burner."
Quit while you're ahead	Stop before things get worse	Discussing risk avoidance	"You should quit while you're ahead."

Read between the lines	Look for hidden meanings	Discussing interpretation	"You have to read between the lines."
See eye to eye	Agree	Discussing agreement	"We don't see eye to eye on this issue."
Take it with a grain of salt	Don't take it too seriously	Discussing skepticism	"Take his advice with a grain of salt."
Under the radar	Not attracting attention	Discussing subtlety	"He stayed under the radar during the meeting."
Vice versa	The other way around	Discussing reversal	"He likes me, and vice versa."
Walk a mile in someone's shoes	Understand someone else's perspective	Discussing empathy	"Before you judge, walk a mile in someone's shoes."
You reap what you sow	What you do now will affect your future	Discussing consequences	"Be careful; you reap what you sow."
Zero in on	Focus closely on	Discussing focus	"The detective zeroed in on the main suspect."

A bird in the hand	Better to have a sure thing	Discussing caution	"A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush."
Beat a dead horse	Persist in a futile effort	Discussing futility	"Don't beat a dead horse; it's over."
Cut to the chase	Get to the point	Discussing directness	"Enough small talk, let's cut to the chase."
Eat humble pie	Admit a mistake	Discussing apologies	"He had to eat humble pie after his prediction was wrong."
Forbidden fruit	Something that's tempting but off-limits	Discussing temptation	"The boss's new car is like forbidden fruit."
Grease someone's palm	Bribe	Discussing bribery	"He tried to grease the officer's palm to avoid a ticket."
Hit the hay	Go to bed	Discussing sleep	"I'm really tired; time to hit the hay."
In a pickle	In a difficult situation	Discussing challenges	"He found himself in a pickle with nowhere to turn."

Jump on the bandwagon	Join a popular trend	Discussing popularity	"Everyone is jumping on the bandwagon of this new diet."
Keep the ball rolling	Maintain momentum	Discussing continuation	"Let's keep the ball rolling and finish this project."
Let the cat out of the bag	Reveal a secret	Discussing secrets	"She let the cat out of the bag about their wedding plans."
Make a mountain out of a molehill	Exaggerate a small problem	Discussing exaggeration	"Don't make a mountain out of a molehill; it's a small issue."
Nip it in the bud	Stop something before it grows	Discussing prevention	"We need to nip this issue in the bud before it escalates."
Out of the frying pan into the fire	Go from bad to worse	Discussing worsening situations	"He went from the frying pan into the fire by changing jobs."
Pull someone's leg	Joking or teasing	Discussing humor	"Don't worry, I'm just pulling your leg."

Quick and dirty	Done quickly but not well	Discussing quickness	"This is a quick and dirty solution, but it works."
Rain on someone's parade	Ruin someone's plans or mood	Discussing disruption	"Don't rain on my parade; I'm really excited about this."
Shoot the breeze	Chat casually	Discussing casual conversation	"We sat around shooting the breeze for hours."
Take a rain check	Postpone	Discussing postponement	"I can't make it tonight; can I take a rain check?"
Under the weather	Feeling unwell	Discussing health	"I'm staying home because I'm under the weather."
Venture a guess	Make a tentative guess	Discussing uncertainty	"If I had to venture a guess, I'd say around \$200."
Walk on eggshells	Be overly cautious	Discussing caution	"I feel like I'm walking on eggshells around her."

You can't have your cake and eat it too	Can't have it both ways	Discussing limitations	"You can't have your cake and eat it too; make a choice."
Zero to hero	From nothing to success	Discussing transformation	"He went from zero to hero after winning the championship."
Zest for life	Great enthusiasm	Discussing enthusiasm	"Her zest for life is truly contagious."
Your guess is as good as mine	No idea	Discussing uncertainty	"What time will they arrive? Your guess is as good as mine."
You reap what you sow	Consequences follow actions	Discussing consequences	"You didn't study, and now you've failed—you reap what you sow."
X marks the spot	Indicate an important location	Discussing locations	"According to the map, X marks the spot where the treasure is."
Wrench in the works	Something that disrupts	Discussing disruption	"The sudden storm threw a wrench in the works of our picnic."

Worth its weight in gold	Extremely valuable	Discussing value	"This antique is worth its weight in gold."
Worn out welcome	Overstayed one's welcome	Discussing etiquette	"They've really worn out their welcome by staying so long."
Words of wisdom	Insightful advice	Discussing advice	"My grandmother always has words of wisdom to share."
Word of mouth	Information passed by verbal communication	Discussing communication	"Their business grew mainly through word of mouth."
Without a hitch	Without any problems	Discussing smoothness	"The event went off without a hitch."
Wing it	Do without preparation	Discussing improvisation	"I forgot to study, so I'll have to wing it during the exam."
Wild goose chase	Futile effort	Discussing futility	"Looking for that book in this huge library is a wild goose chase."
Whole nine yards	Everything; all	Discussing completeness	"She gave the whole nine yards to make the event a success."

When pigs fly	Something that will never happen	Discussing impossibility	"He'll tidy his room when pigs fly."
Wet behind the ears	Inexperienced	Discussing inexperience	"He's still wet behind the ears, having just started the job."
Water under the bridge	Past events best forgotten	Discussing the past	"Let's forget our argument; it's water under the bridge."
Wash your hands of	Disassociate oneself from	Discussing disassociation	"She washed her hands of the whole affair."
Walking on air	Extremely happy	Discussing happiness	"Ever since she got the job, she's been walking on air."
Waiting for the other shoe to drop	Anticipating further developments	Discussing anticipation	"Now that the first part of the project is done, I'm waiting for the other shoe to drop."
Up in arms	Very angry	Discussing anger	"The community is up in arms over the new policy."

Under your nose	Right in front of you	Discussing visibility	"The keys were right under your nose the entire time."
Two peas in a pod	Very similar	Discussing similarity	"They are like two peas in a pod, always together."
Turn the tables	Reverse the situation	Discussing reversal	"She turned the tables and defeated her longtime rival."
Turn a blind eye	Ignore something	Discussing ignorance	"He turned a blind eye to the misconduct of his team."
Twists and turns	Complications or obstacles	Discussing complications	"The story had so many twists and turns, it was hard to follow."