

100 English Idioms

Meanings & Example Sentences

By TypoGrammar

Tip: Try to use 3 idioms a day in speaking or writing to make them stick.

1. Break the ice

Meaning: Start a conversation or reduce tension.

Example: He told a funny story to break the ice at the first meeting.

2. Hit the nail on the head

Meaning: Be exactly right.

Example: You hit the nail on the head when you said the plan is too expensive.

3. Piece of cake

Meaning: Very easy.

Example: The first question was a piece of cake.

4. Once in a blue moon

Meaning: Very rarely.

Example: We eat out once in a blue moon.

5. Under the weather

Meaning: Feeling sick.

Example: I'm a bit under the weather today, so I'll rest.

6. Spill the beans

Meaning: Reveal a secret.

Example: Don't spill the beans about the surprise party.

7. Cost an arm and a leg

Meaning: Be very expensive.

Example: That designer bag costs an arm and a leg.

8. The ball is in your court

Meaning: It's your turn to decide or act.

Example: I've given you all the details—now the ball is in your court.

9. Bite the bullet

Meaning: Face something difficult bravely.

Example: She bit the bullet and made the tough phone call.

10. Cut corners

Meaning: Do something cheaply or carelessly.

Example: They cut corners on materials, and the product broke quickly.

11. Burn the midnight oil

Meaning: Work late into the night.

Example: He burned the midnight oil to finish the report.

12. Hit the books

Meaning: Study hard.

Example: I can't go out tonight—I need to hit the books.

13. On the same page

Meaning: Agree or understand in the same way.

Example: Let's review the goals so we're on the same page.

14. Back to the drawing board

Meaning: Start again with a new plan.

Example: The design failed, so it's back to the drawing board.

15. Call it a day

Meaning: Stop working for now.

Example: We've done enough—let's call it a day.

16. Get cold feet

Meaning: Become nervous and hesitate.

Example: He got cold feet right before the presentation.

17. Kill two birds with one stone

Meaning: Achieve two goals with one action.

Example: By cycling to work, I save money and exercise—two birds with one stone.

18. Miss the boat

Meaning: Miss an opportunity.

Example: If you don't apply today, you'll miss the boat.

19. Pull someone's leg

Meaning: Joke or tease.

Example: I'm just pulling your leg—relax!

20. On cloud nine

Meaning: Extremely happy.

Example: She was on cloud nine after hearing the good news.

21. Face the music

Meaning: Accept the consequences.

Example: He had to face the music after missing the deadline.

22. Go the extra mile

Meaning: Make additional effort.

Example: Great teachers always go the extra mile for their students.

23. In hot water

Meaning: In trouble.

Example: He's in hot water for breaking the rules.

24. Jump the gun

Meaning: Act too soon.

Example: Don't jump the gun—wait until the contract is signed.

25. Keep an eye on

Meaning: Watch carefully.

Example: Can you keep an eye on my suitcase?

26. Make ends meet

Meaning: Have enough money to live.

Example: They work two jobs to make ends meet.

27. Out of the blue

Meaning: Unexpectedly.

Example: Out of the blue, she offered me a new job.

28. Play it safe

Meaning: Avoid risk.

Example: I'll play it safe and choose the simpler option.

29. Rain on someone's parade

Meaning: Spoil someone's plans or mood.

Example: I don't want to rain on your parade, but the shop is closed.

30. See eye to eye

Meaning: Agree.

Example: We don't always see eye to eye, but we respect each other.

31. Take it with a grain of salt

Meaning: Don't believe something completely.

Example: Take online rumors with a grain of salt.

32. Beat around the bush

Meaning: Avoid saying something directly.

Example: Stop beating around the bush and tell me the truth.

33. By the book

Meaning: According to the rules.

Example: The officer handled the case by the book.

34. Drop the ball

Meaning: Make a mistake or fail to do something.

Example: I dropped the ball by forgetting the meeting.

35. Hang in there

Meaning: Don't give up.

Example: Hang in there—your English will improve.

36. In the long run

Meaning: Over a long period.

Example: Healthy habits help in the long run.

37. Keep your chin up

Meaning: Stay positive.

Example: Keep your chin up—you'll find a better job.

38. Learn the ropes

Meaning: Learn how something works.

Example: It took me a week to learn the ropes at my new role.

39. No pain, no gain

Meaning: You must work hard to succeed.

Example: Training is tough, but no pain, no gain.

40. Off the hook

Meaning: Free from blame or punishment.

Example: You're off the hook this time, but be careful.

41. Read between the lines

Meaning: Understand the hidden meaning.

Example: Read between the lines—he's not interested.

42. Save for a rainy day

Meaning: Save money for future problems.

Example: She saves for a rainy day in case of emergencies.

43. Time flies

Meaning: Time passes quickly.

Example: Time flies when you're having fun.

44. Wrap your head around

Meaning: Understand something difficult.

Example: I can't wrap my head around this math problem yet.

45. A blessing in disguise

Meaning: Something good that seemed bad at first.

Example: Missing the flight was a blessing in disguise—we avoided a storm.

46. Cut to the chase

Meaning: Get to the main point.

Example: Cut to the chase—what do you want?

47. Down to earth

Meaning: Practical and realistic.

Example: Despite his fame, he's very down to earth.

48. Every cloud has a silver lining

Meaning: There is something good in every bad situation.

Example: I failed once, but every cloud has a silver lining—I learned a lot.

49. Get the hang of it

Meaning: Learn how to do something.

Example: After a few tries, you'll get the hang of it.

50. In a nutshell

Meaning: In summary.

Example: In a nutshell, the project is on schedule.

51. On thin ice

Meaning: In a risky situation.

Example: He's on thin ice after being late again.

52. Pull yourself together

Meaning: Calm down and control yourself.

Example: Pull yourself together—we need to focus.

53. Ring a bell

Meaning: Sound familiar.

Example: That movie title rings a bell, but I can't remember it.

54. Sit on the fence

Meaning: Remain undecided.

Example: You can't sit on the fence forever—choose a side.

55. The best of both worlds

Meaning: All the advantages of two things.

Example: Working remotely gives me the best of both worlds: comfort and productivity.

56. Weather the storm

Meaning: Survive a difficult time.

Example: They weathered the storm and rebuilt their business.

57. Add fuel to the fire

Meaning: Make a bad situation worse.

Example: Arguing now will only add fuel to the fire.

58. Back on your feet

Meaning: Recovered after illness or trouble.

Example: After two weeks, he was back on his feet.

59. Cut someone some slack

Meaning: Be less strict or give forgiveness.

Example: Cut her some slack—she's new here.

60. Don't judge a book by its cover

Meaning: Don't judge by appearance.

Example: He looks serious, but don't judge a book by its cover.

61. Hold your horses

Meaning: Wait and be patient.

Example: Hold your horses—we're not ready to start.

62. In the same boat

Meaning: In the same situation.

Example: We're in the same boat, so let's solve it together.

63. Let sleeping dogs lie

Meaning: Avoid restarting old conflicts.

Example: Don't mention that topic—let sleeping dogs lie.

64. Make waves

Meaning: Cause trouble or attract attention.

Example: He doesn't like to make waves at work.

65. On the ball

Meaning: Alert and efficient.

Example: She's really on the ball with customer support.

66. Play devil's advocate

Meaning: Argue the opposite to test ideas.

Example: Let me play devil's advocate and question this plan.

67. Throw in the towel

Meaning: Give up.

Example: He didn't throw in the towel, even after many failures.

68. Up the ante

Meaning: Increase the effort or stakes.

Example: They upped the ante by offering a bigger discount.

69. Walk on eggshells

Meaning: Be very careful not to upset someone.

Example: I'm walking on eggshells around him today.

70. Your guess is as good as mine

Meaning: I don't know.

Example: Where did she go? Your guess is as good as mine.

71. Under your nose

Meaning: Very obvious or nearby.

Example: The solution was right under your nose.

72. Whole nine yards

Meaning: Everything; the full amount.

Example: They went the whole nine yards for the wedding.

73. Cross your fingers

Meaning: Hope for good luck.

Example: Cross your fingers that we pass the exam.

74. Easy does it

Meaning: Go slowly and carefully.

Example: Easy does it—don't spill the coffee.

75. Get out of hand

Meaning: Become uncontrolled.

Example: The discussion got out of hand quickly.

76. Keep something at bay

Meaning: Keep something under control.

Example: Deep breathing keeps stress at bay.

77. Make a long story short

Meaning: Summarize briefly.

Example: Long story short, we missed the train.

78. Steal someone's thunder

Meaning: Take credit for someone else's idea.

Example: He stole my thunder by presenting my idea first.

79. Under the table

Meaning: Secretly and illegally.

Example: They paid him under the table.

80. You can say that again

Meaning: Strong agreement.

Example: This traffic is terrible. You can say that again.

81. Bark up the wrong tree

Meaning: Accuse or suspect the wrong person.

Example: If you blame me, you're barking up the wrong tree.

82. Bend over backwards

Meaning: Try very hard to help.

Example: She bent over backwards to make guests comfortable.

83. Better late than never

Meaning: It's better to do something late than not at all.

Example: He finally apologized—better late than never.

84. Bite off more than you can chew

Meaning: Take on too much.

Example: I bit off more than I can chew with three projects.

85. Break a leg

Meaning: Good luck.

Example: You'll do great in the interview—break a leg!

86. Bring home the bacon

Meaning: Earn money for the family.

Example: She works hard to bring home the bacon.

87. Burn bridges

Meaning: Destroy relationships.

Example: Don't burn bridges—you may need them later.

88. Caught red-handed

Meaning: Caught doing something wrong.

Example: He was caught red-handed cheating on the test.

89. Cry over spilled milk

Meaning: Worry about the past; it can't be changed.

Example: Don't cry over spilled milk—focus on solutions.

90. Curiosity killed the cat

Meaning: Being too curious can cause trouble.

Example: Don't open it—curiosity killed the cat.

91. Don't put all your eggs in one basket

Meaning: Don't risk everything on one plan.

Example: Diversify your skills—don't put all your eggs in one basket.

92. Get something off your chest

Meaning: Talk about something that bothers you.

Example: I need to get something off my chest—I'm worried.

93. Go back to square one

Meaning: Start again from the beginning.

Example: The device reset, so we went back to square one.

94. Go cold turkey

Meaning: Stop a habit suddenly.

Example: He went cold turkey and quit sugar.

95. Hit the sack

Meaning: Go to sleep.

Example: It's late—I'm going to hit the sack.

96. It takes two to tango

Meaning: Both sides share responsibility.

Example: They both made mistakes—it takes two to tango.

97. Keep your head above water

Meaning: Manage to survive financially or emotionally.

Example: With rent rising, it's hard to keep my head above water.

98. Leave no stone unturned

Meaning: Do everything possible to find or solve something.

Example: We left no stone unturned to find the lost document.

99. Make a mountain out of a molehill

Meaning: Overreact to a small issue.

Example: It's a small delay—don't make a mountain out of a molehill.

100. On top of the world

Meaning: Very happy or proud.

Example: After passing the exam, I felt on top of the world.