



TỪ ĐIỂN VỀ THÀNH NGỮ

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A

abide by (something)

- to follow the rules of something

The cleaning staff must abide by the rules of the school.

able to breathe easily again

- to be able to relax and recover from a stressful time or event

My friend was able to breathe easily again when his company did not go bankrupt.

able to do (something) blindfolded

- to be able to do something easily and quickly

The car was easy to fix and we were able to do it blindfolded.

able to do (something) standing on one's head

- to be able to do something easily and quickly

The boy is good at fixing his bicycle. He can do it standing on his head.

able to take a joke

- to be able to let others laugh and joke about you

Our boss is not able to take a joke. We must be careful what we say to him.

about time

- to be something that should have happened earlier

"It is about time that you returned that book to me."

about to (do something)

- to be on the point of doing something

I was about to leave my house when the phone rang.

above all

- mainly, especially

I like adventure movies but above all I love horror movies.

above all else

- most importantly of all

Above all else, I plan to go to the Natural History Museum when I visit the city.

above and beyond

- to be more than is required

The work that the man did on our house was above and beyond what was required.

above reproach

- to be not deserving of blame or criticism

The actions of the police officer were above reproach.

above suspicion

- to be very honest so that nobody will suspect you of doing something wrong

The man's actions are always above suspicion.

absent-minded

- to be forgetful

My grandfather is very absent-minded and he often forgets his keys.

accept an offer

- to agree to an offer or proposal

I accepted the offer to buy my car.

according to Hoyle

- doing something strictly by the rules, doing something the usual and correct way (Hoyle was a writer who was an expert on the rules of card games)

"According to Hoyle, we should not use this room but probably nobody will complain if we do use it."

according to (someone or something)

- as said or told by someone, in agreement with something, in the order of something, in proportion to something

According to our teacher, there will be no class next week.

We did everything according to the terms of the agreement.

account for (something)

- to provide an answer/explanation for something

The bad weather accounts for the fact that only a few people came to the meeting.

acid test

- a test where the conclusions are beyond doubt

The problem was an acid test of our faith in the new manager.

acquire a taste for (something)

- to learn to like something

We acquired a taste for classical music during our trip to Europe.

across the board

- equally for everyone or everything

The taxes have increased across the board and everyone must pay more.

act as a guinea pig

- to allow some kind of test to be performed on someone

I was not happy to act as a guinea pig on the new training material.

act high and mighty

- to act proud and powerful

The woman always acts high and mighty and nobody likes her.

act one's age

- to behave as a mature person, to behave equal to one's age

My friend never acts her age in public.

act up

- to misbehave

The children began to act up during the field trip.

add fuel to the fire

- to make a problem worse, to make an angry person more angry

The company added fuel to the fire when they criticized the workers.

add insult to injury

- to make a person who already feels bad to feel worse, to make a bad situation worse

Our boss added insult to injury when she refused to let us use the Internet during lunch.

add up

- to total up to a certain amount

I will add up the money that I owe to my father and give it to him.

add up (to something)

- to mean something, to result in something

The things that my friend said about his boss do not add up to anything.

advise (someone) against (something)

- to suggest that something should not be done
I advised my friend not to swim in the river.

afraid of one's own shadow

- to be easily frightened
The small dog is afraid of his own shadow.

after Idioms

after a fashion

- poorly, barely adequate
The cleaning staff cleaned the lunchroom after a fashion but not very well.

after all

- in spite of what was expected
I have decided not to take swimming lessons after all.
It did not rain today after all.

after all

- emphasizes something that should be considered
"You don't need to phone him. After all, he never phones you."

after all is said and done

- finally, when everything is settled
After all is said and done the mayor of our city is doing a very good job.

after hours

- after the regular closing or finishing time
Our library has a place to return books after hours.

after the fact

- after something has happened
The man said that he was sorry but it was after the fact. He had already caused many problems.

again and again

- repeatedly
I told my friend again and again not to phone late at night.

against one's will

- to be without a person's consent or agreement
The police took the man to jail against his will.

against the clock

- before a particular time
We worked against the clock to finish the project.

ahead of one's time

- ideas or attitudes that are more advanced than those of other people
The ideas of the politician were ahead of his time.

ahead of schedule

- before the time on a schedule that has been decided
We finished our work ahead of schedule.

ahead of the game

- to have done more than necessary
We worked hard all week in order to be ahead of the game on Monday morning.

ahead of time

- earlier than arranged or planned
We started the meeting ahead of time so that we could go home early.

aim at (something)

- to plan or try to reach a target

We are aiming at a big increase in sales next year.

air one's dirty laundry/linen in public

- to make public something embarrassing that should be a secret

The dinner party became uncomfortable when the host began to air his colleague's dirty laundry in public.

air one's grievances

- to complain (often publicly)

We aired our grievances during the monthly meeting.

air (something)

- to broadcast something on television or radio

They will air the game tomorrow.

air (something) out

- to freshen something by putting it in the open air

We put the blankets outside in order to air them out.

alive and kicking

- to be well and healthy

My aunt is ninety years old and she is very much alive and kicking.

alive and well

- to be well and healthy

The worker was alive and well after the accident.

all Idioms

all along

- all the time, throughout

I knew all along that my friend would not get the promotion.

all at once

- suddenly, without warning

All at once, the fire alarm rang and we had to leave the building.

all day long

- the whole day

The girl was happy to wait all day long for the mail to arrive.

all dressed up

- dressed in one's best clothes

The girls were all dressed up for the evening.

all ears

- to be eager to listen to someone

"I'm all ears, please tell me about the party."

all for (someone or something)

- to be very much in favor of someone or something

The woman is all for the manager and she never criticizes her.

all important

- most important, urgent or necessary

The meeting is all important and I plan to attend it.

all in

- to be tired, to be exhausted

I am all in and will go to bed early tonight.

all in a day's work

- to be part of what is expected of you

It was all in a day's work when the firefighters rescued the cat.

all in all

- in summary, after considering everything

We had a few problems but all in all the meeting was successful.

all in one piece

- safely, without damage

Our furniture arrived all in one piece after we moved.

all manner of (someone or something)

- all types of people or things

There were all manner of people at the party.

all night long

- throughout the whole night

We could hear the people next door talking all night long.

all of a sudden

- suddenly, without advance warning

All of a sudden, it became cloudy and began to rain.

all or nothing

- everything, one hundred percent of something

It is all or nothing. If I cannot fully participate in the meeting I will not attend.

all-out-effort

- a very good and thorough effort

We are making an all-out-effort to finish our work.

all over but the shouting

- to be decided and finished

It was all over but the shouting for the football fans after their team lost the game.

all over the place

- everywhere

We traveled all over the place on our holiday.

all right

- okay, satisfactory

It should be all right for me to bring my friend to the party.

all set

- to be ready to begin, to be okay

We were all set so we began the meeting.

all sweetness and light

- to be very sweet, to be innocent and helpful

The girl is all sweetness and light after she does something bad.

all systems go

- everything is ready (often used when a rocket is launched)

It was all systems go and we began the installation of the new computer system.

all talk (and no action)

- to talk about doing something but never really doing it

Our boss is all talk and no action and nothing new is ever done in our department.

all the livelong day

- throughout the whole day

I know the words to the song, "I've been working on the railroad, all the livelong day."

all the rage

- to be in current fashion

The new sneakers were all the rage during the summer.

all the time

- always, continually, often

My sister asks for money all the time but I never give it to her.

all thumbs

- to have difficulty fixing things or working with one's hands, to be clumsy
My friend is all thumbs when he fixes things around his house.

all to the good

- for the best, for one's benefit

It was all to the good that my sister quit her job.

all told

- including everything or everyone, counting everything

All told, there were at least twelve candidates for the job.

allow for (someone or something)

- to plan to have enough of something, to plan on the possibility of something

We must allow for enough time to go to the stadium.

along with (someone or something)

- in addition to someone or something

I went to the concert along with my friend.

amount to (something)

- to total something, to result in something

The small amounts of time later amounted to much time.

amount to (something)

- to become successful

The boy will never amount to anything if he does not change his behavior.

amount to the same thing

- to be the same or have the same effect as something

Going by taxi or by bus amounts to the same thing. We will still be late for the concert.

and so on

- and other similar details, et cetera

I was hot and I was tired and I did not have any water and so on. It was terrible.

answer to (someone)

- to explain or justify one's actions to someone

The manager had to answer to the company president about the financial problems.

any number of (someone or something)

- a large number of people or something

I have any number of reasons not to buy a new computer.

appear out of nowhere

- to appear suddenly, to appear without warning

The dog appeared out of nowhere during our walk on the beach.

apple of (someone's) eye

- someone or something that is very precious or important to you

The man's youngest daughter is the apple of his eye.

argue for the sake of arguing/argument

- to argue only to be different

My brother always argues for the sake of arguing.

arise from

- to originate from, to be caused by

Fires often arise from people not being careful.

arm and a leg

- a large amount of money

The man's new car cost him an arm and a leg.

arm in arm

- to be joined together by the arms

The young girls walked to school arm in arm.

armed and dangerous

- to have a weapon that may be used (usually used for a criminal)

The criminal was armed and dangerous when the police arrested him.

armed to the teeth

- to be armed with many weapons

The police were armed to the teeth during the raid.

around the clock

- all day and all night

We worked around the clock to prepare the store to open.

arrange for (someone or something)

- to make practical plans for something to happen or someone to do something

We arranged for someone to come and fix our broken shower.

arrive on the scene

- to appear in a certain place

When the fire department arrived on the scene the fire was very large.

as Idioms

as a last resort

- if everything else fails

As a last resort we decided to borrow some money to buy the car.

as a matter of fact

- actually, in fact

“As a matter of fact, we have been to the art gallery many times.”

as a result of (something)

- because of something that has happened

As a result of a car accident my friend could not work for several months.

as a rule

- usually, as a habit

As a rule, I get up at 7:00 every morning.

as a whole

- taken or considered all together

As a whole our boss is very good although some people do not like him.

as clean as a hound's tooth

- very clean

The classroom was as clean as a hound's tooth when the students finished cleaning it.

as comfortable as an old shoe

- very comfortable, very familiar

I felt as comfortable as an old shoe when I entered my aunt's house.

as common as an old shoe

- low class, badly mannered

The young woman is as common as an old shoe.

as crooked as a dog's hind leg

- dishonest

The politician is as crooked as a dog's hind leg and nobody trusts him.

as dull as dishwater

- very uninteresting

The speaker at the conference was as dull as dishwater.

as far as

- to the extent or degree of something

As far as I know the movie will start next week.

as far as possible

- as much as possible

We went as far as possible with the project before we had to stop.

We plan to drive as far as possible tomorrow.

as fit as a fiddle

- to be healthy and physically fit

My grandfather is ninety years old but he is as fit as a fiddle.

as for (someone or something)

- with regard to, concerning

"As for me, I think that I will go home now."

as good as one's word

- to be dependable if one promises something

My friend is as good as his word. You can always trust him.

as if

- in the same way that something would be, that

The drink tastes as if it were made with orange juice.

It seemed as if the whole town came to the concert.

as is

- in whatever condition something happens to be

We bought the old sofa as is. It was very cheap.

as long as

- provided that, on condition that

"As long as you promise to be very careful you can borrow my car."

as luck would have it

- by chance

As luck would have it, I was able to borrow some clothes for the party.

as one

- as if a group were one person

The crowd stood up as one and began to cheer.

as pale as a ghost

- extremely pale

My grandfather was as pale as a ghost when he entered the hospital.

as pale as death

- extremely pale

The woman in the hospital waiting room was as pale as death.

as plain as the nose on one's face

- obvious

It is as plain as the nose on our face who broke the computer.

as sick as a dog

- very sick

My friend was as sick as a dog when he left the restaurant last night.

as soon as

- just after something, when

I phoned my friend as soon as I finished dinner.

as such

- the way something is

"As such, I will not be able to approve your application for a loan."

as the crow flies

- by the most direct way, along a straight line between two places

As the crow flies, it is not very far between my house and my office.

as to

- with regard to, concerning, according to

We have some questions as to how the accident happened.

The players were put into groups as to their ability.

as tough as an old boot

- very tough, not easily moved by feelings such as pity

The old lady is as tough as an old boot and never shows her feelings at all.

as usual

- most of the time, following the usual pattern

As usual, the girl forgot to bring her book to class.

as well

- in addition, also, too

I plan to take a computer course this summer as well.

as well as (someone or something)

- in addition to someone or something

"Please bring your swimming suit as well as your towel."

as yet

- until now, up to the present

As yet, our secretary has not talked about her plans to leave the company.

ask for (something)

- to deserve something, to receive just punishment for something

The boy is asking for some kind of punishment for what he is doing.

ask for the moon

- to ask for too much

The woman is asking for the moon. She will never get what she wants.

ask for trouble

- to behave in a way that will likely cause trouble

The boy is asking for trouble if he misses another class.

ask (someone) out or ask out (someone)

- to ask a person for a date

My friend finally asked the woman at the bank out.

asleep at the switch

- to not be alert to an opportunity

I was asleep at the switch. I did not know about the job so I did not apply for it.

assault and battery

- a criminal charge where one violently attacks and beats someone

The man was arrested for assault and battery after the fight.

at Idioms**at a loss**

- in a state of uncertainty or bewilderment

We were at a loss about what to do with the broken computer.

at a loss for words

- speechless, unable to speak

I was at a loss for words when I met my friend after many years.

at a standstill

- in a situation where no progress can be made, at an impasse

The traffic on the road was at a standstill because of the accident.

at a stretch

- continuously

My friend sometimes works for three weeks at a stretch.

at all costs

- regardless of the cost or difficulty, no matter what

The company wants to protect their product design at all costs.

at any rate

- anyway

"At any rate, I am not going to a movie tonight."

at bay

- at a distance

We tried to keep the dog at bay when we entered the building.

at best

- under the most favorable circumstances

The doctors said that the man had ten months at best to live.

at cross-purposes

- to have opposite ways of doing something, to have opposing goals

The two men are at cross purposes. They cannot agree about anything.

at death's door

- to be near death

The young woman was at death's door after the accident.

at ease

- to be relaxed and comfortable

The players felt at ease after the coach talked to them.

at every turn

- everywhere that one looks

When we visited Rome, there was a group of tourists at every turn.

at face value

- the apparent value of something, the value that is printed on a stamp or a bond

At face value the old stamp was worth almost nothing.

at fault

- to be responsible for something, to be to blame for something

The truck driver was at fault for the terrible accident.

at first

- at the beginning

At first, I did not want to go to the movie but I later changed my mind.

at first blush

- when first seen, without careful study

At first blush the man seemed like a good worker but later he had many problems.

at hand

- within reach, nearby

I stopped working because I did not have any tools at hand.

at heart

- basically, fundamentally

The woman is a nice person at heart although many people dislike her.

at home

- in one's house

I left my money at home so I had to borrow some.

at it again

- to be doing something again

The two boys were at it again. We could hear them fighting.

at large

- to be free, to not be captured

The criminal was at large for many months.

at last

- finally, after a long time

I waited all morning for my friend's call until at last it came.

at least

- no less than

There were at least 60,000 people in the stadium.

at length

- in detail, finally

The speaker talked at length about the new product.

at loggerheads (with someone)

- to be having a quarrel or disagreement with someone, to oppose someone

We are at loggerheads with the company over their plans to build a new factory.

at loose ends

- restless and unsettled

My friend's mother was at loose ends after her husband died.

at odds (with someone)

- in disagreement with someone

The man has been at odds with his boss over his new sales territory.

at once

- immediately

The police came at once after we called them.

at one sitting

- at one time

We finished the food at one sitting.

at peace

- peaceful, happy

The woman was relaxed and at peace after her friend's funeral.

at random

- without sequence or order

The members of the team were chosen at random from among the regular players.

at risk

- in danger

The children were at risk of getting sick when the disease spread in the school.

at sea

- to be on the sea, to be away on a voyage on the ocean

My grandfather was at sea for several months when he was a young man.

at sea (about something)

- to be confused about something, to be lost

Most members of the class were at sea when the teacher tried to explain the difficult theory.

at sixes and sevens

- to be lost and bewildered

We were at sixes and sevens when the local grocery store closed.

at (someone's) beck and call

- to be always ready to serve someone or do something for someone

The woman is always at her husband's beck and call.

at (someone's) earliest convenience

- when something is convenient for someone

I plan to speak to the bank manager at his earliest convenience.

at (someone's) service

- ready to help someone in any way possible

A member of the hotel staff was at our service during our visit.

at stake

- to be able to be won or lost, to be at risk

Much money was at stake during the negotiations for the new stadium.

at the appointed hour

- at the time that has been decided

At the appointed hour, the team arrived at the stadium.

at the appointed time

- at the time that has been decided

We went to meet our lawyer at the appointed time.

at the bottom of the hour

- at the half hour - 10:30, 11:30 etc. (at the bottom of a clock)

The weather forecast is on the radio at the bottom of the hour.

at the bottom of the ladder

- at the lowest level of pay and status in a company or organization

I will start at the bottom of the ladder at my new job.

at the crack of dawn

- when the first light of the day appears, very early in the morning

We left for our holiday at the crack of dawn.

at the drop of a hat

- immediately and without any pressure

My friend will always help me at the drop of a hat.

at the eleventh hour

- at the last possible moment

The company and the union settled the strike at the eleventh hour.

at the end of one's rope

- at the limit of one's ability to cope or deal with something

I am at the end of my rope about what to do about my problems at work.

at the end of the day

- when everything else has been taken into consideration

At the end of the day, it was impossible to get the money to build the house.

at the expense of (someone or something)

- to be to the harm of (someone or something)

The man was very successful but it was at the expense of his family and health.

at the latest

- no later than

The tour will start at noon at the latest.

at the outset (of something)

- from the first or early stage of something

At the outset of the meeting there were problems between some members of the group.

at the outside

- as the highest estimate

We can feed one hundred people at the outside during the seminar.

at the present time

- now, at present

At the present time there are no extra helpers available.

at the top of one's lungs

- with a very loud voice

I cried out for my friend at the top of my lungs.

at the top of the hour

- at the beginning of the hour - 12:00, 1:00 etc. (at the top of a clock)

The radio news always starts at the top of the hour.

at this juncture

- at the present time

At this juncture there is no point to have a meeting.

at this stage of the game

- currently, at the current point in some event

At this stage of the game we cannot change the plans for the class trip.

at times

- sometimes, occasionally

At times, our teacher is very nice but at other times she is not nice.

at will

- whenever one wants, freely

The little boy was able to do what he wanted at will.

attend to (someone or something)

- to take care or deal with someone or something

The doctor attended to the patient.

attract (someone's) attention

- to cause someone to notice you

The strange behavior of the man attracted the policeman's attention.

augur well for (someone or something)

- to predict good things for someone or something

The poor business conditions do not augur well for the workers.

avail oneself of (something)

- to use something that is available

We availed ourselves of the office space to prepare for the school festival.

avenue of escape

- the route along which someone or something escapes

There was no avenue of escape for the bank robbers.

average out at

- to calculate something as an average

The cost of our hotels averaged out at much more than we expected.

avoid (someone or something) like the plague

- to avoid someone or something totally

The girls avoided the new student like the plague.

B

back Idioms

back and forth

- backwards and forwards, first one way and then the other way

The argument went back and forth before the judge made a decision.

back down (from someone or something)

- to fail to carry through on a threat to do something

The government backed down from their plan to sell the national airline.

back in circulation

- to be available to the public again (a library book)

The books were back in circulation after we returned them to the library.

back in circulation

- to be socially active again (after the breakup of a relationship between two people)

My friend stopped dating his girlfriend and he is now back in circulation.

(one's) back is against the wall

- one is in a very difficult position

The man's back was against the wall and there was nothing that he could do to change the situation.

back of beyond

- somewhere very remote

Every summer we go to the back of beyond for a camping trip.

back off

- to retreat or move away (from a fight or argument or an object)

The man wanted to start an argument but finally he backed off.

back on one's feet

- to return to good financial or physical health

My friend is back on his feet after his company went out of business.

back on the front burner

- to be talked about in the news again, to be important and under discussion again

The problem with the large supplier is back on the front burner again.

back out (something) from a parking space or back (something) out of a parking space

- to drive a vehicle out of a parking space

The woman backed the car out of the parking space.

back out (of something)

- to withdraw from an agreement or promise, to fail to fulfill a promise or obligation

Our company backed out of the agreement with the foreign firm.

back the wrong horse

- to support someone or something that cannot win or succeed

We backed the wrong horse in the election and our candidate lost badly.

back-to-back

- something follows immediately after something else, two people touching backs

There were two back-to-back games today because of the rain last week.

We sat back-to-back during the contest.

back to square one

- to go back to the beginning of something

The city went back to square one in their effort to build a new bridge.

back to the drawing board

- to go back and start a project or idea from the beginning

Our boss does not like our idea so we must go back to the drawing board.

back to the salt mines

- to return to work or return to something else that you do not want to do

We finished our lunch and went back to the salt mines.

back up (something) or back (something) up

- to drive or go backwards

The driver had to back the truck up.

back up (someone or something) or back (someone or something) up

- to support someone or something

The supervisor made a mistake and his manager refused to back him up.

bad blood (between people)

- unpleasant feelings between people

There was much bad blood between the three brothers.

bad hair day

- a day when one's hair looks messy, a day of mishaps and other problems

The girl is having a bad hair day. She looks terrible.

I am having a bad hair day. Everything is going wrong.

bad-mouth (someone or something)

- to say bad things about someone or something

The supervisor has the habit of bad-mouthing her boss.

bag of tricks

- a collection of special techniques or methods

The teacher has a bag of tricks to keep her students occupied.

bail out (of something)

- to abandon a situation, to jump out of an airplane

The plan to buy a summer home with our friends was becoming too expensive so we decided to bail out.

bail out (someone) or bail (someone) out

- to pay a sum of money that allows someone to leave jail while waiting for a trial

The singer had to pay much money to bail himself out of prison.

bail out (someone or something) or bail (someone or something) out

- to help or rescue someone or something

The government decided to bail out the troubled bank.

balance the books

- to check that all the money in a business is accounted for

The accountant spent several days trying to balance the books of his company.

ball is in (someone's) court

- it is up to this person to make the next move (from tennis or a similar game)

We made an offer to buy the business and now the ball is in the owner's court to accept our offer or not.

ball of fire

- an active and energetic person

The woman is a ball of fire and is always busy doing something.

ballpark estimate/figure

- a guess that is in a certain area or range

We had a ballpark estimate about how much it would cost to buy the business.

bang one's head against the wall

- to try to do something that is hopeless

I am banging my head against the wall when I try to ask my boss for something.

bank on (someone or something)

- to be sure of someone or something, to count on someone or something

You can bank on my sister to help you.

banker's hours

- short work hours (like the old hours of a bank when they were rather short)

The man has his own company and likes to work banker's hours.

baptism of fire

- a first experience of something (often difficult or unpleasant)

We went through a baptism of fire when we had to learn how to operate the small business.

bargain for (something)

- to anticipate something, to take something into account

The difficulty of the job was more than I had bargained for.

bargain for (something)

- to negotiate the price and other terms of something

We spent all morning bargaining for the car.

bargain on (something)

- to plan or expect something

We did not bargain on having heavy rain during our summer birthday party.

barge in on (someone or something)

- to interrupt someone or something, to intrude on someone or something

My sister often barges in on me when I am with my friends.

bark is worse than one's bite

- someone is not as bad as they sound

"Don't worry if the boss is angry - his bark is worse than his bite."

bark up the wrong tree

- to make a wrong assumption about something

The police are barking up the wrong tree in their investigation of the criminal.

base one's opinion on (something)

- to form an opinion from something

I based my opinion on the man's previous work and decided not to give him a job.

bat a thousand

- to be successful in everything that you do

The salesman was batting a thousand during his sales trip to Europe.

batten down the hatches

- to prepare for difficult times, to close the hatches in a boat before a storm

A big storm was coming so we decided to batten down the hatches and stay home.

bawl out (someone) or bawl (someone) out

- to scold someone loudly

The woman bawled out her child in the supermarket.

be Idioms

be a new one on (someone)

- to be something that one has not heard before and something that is difficult to believe

It was a new one on me when my friend said that he was studying Russian.

be all ears

- to listen eagerly and carefully

The boy was all ears when the teacher began to talk about the circus.

be all things to all people

- to be everything that is wanted by all people

The politician tries to be all things to all people and it is difficult to know what he really believes.

be bound to

- to be certain, to be sure to

We are bound to be late if we do not hurry.

be curtains for (someone or something)

- to be the end or death for someone or something

It was curtains for my old computer when it finally stopped working.

be game

- to be ready for action or agreeable to participate in something

All of the students were game to go to the science exhibition.

be had

- to be victimized or cheated

I was had by the salesman on the telephone.

be in

- to be popular or fashionable

Recently, long skirts are in.

be in

- to be at one's home or at one's workplace

If my friend is in I will visit him tonight.

be into (something)

- to be interested or involved in something

My friend is very much into music and writing songs.

be of the persuasion that (something) is so

- to believe that something is true or exists

My grandfather was of the persuasion that it is more important to work than to go to school.

be off

- to leave or depart

I plan to be off very early tomorrow morning to go to the airport.

be off to a bad start

- to start something under bad circumstances

The production of the play was off to a bad start when the lights did not work.

be off on the wrong foot

- to start something under bad circumstances

I tried to talk to my new neighbor but it seems that we are off on the wrong foot already.

be out

- to be away from one's work or home

My friend was out so I could not visit him.

be over

- to be finished, to end

We will go home when the class is over.

be that as it may

- even if what you say is true

"Be that as it may, we are not going to permit the school dance to take place."

be the case

- to be true, to be an actual situation

"I do not care if it was the case last year, this year we will do things differently."

be the death of (someone)

- to be the ruin or downfall or death of someone (often used for some kind of problem)

The woman said that her young son's bad behavior would be the death of her.

be the matter

- to be unsatisfactory, to be improper, to be wrong

I do not know what is the matter with the boy.

be through

- to be finished, to end

I do not know when the movie will be through.

be to blame

- to be responsible for something bad or unfortunate

The woman is not to blame for breaking the computer.

be up

- to expire, to be finished

The time was up so we went home.

be with it

- to be able to focus or concentrate on something

The man is not with it and cannot understand what I am saying.

bean counter

- an accountant

We asked the bean counters to look at the figures in the new budget.

bear a grudge (against someone)

- to continue to be angry at someone for something that happened in the past, to not forgive someone for something

The woman continued to bear a grudge against her friend for many years.

bear fruit

- to yield or give results

The girl's hard work began to bear fruit when she won the dance contest.

bear in mind

- to consider that something is so

We have to bear in mind that the child is only three years old when he does something bad.

bear one's cross

- to carry or bear a burden

Raising three children by herself was the way that the woman had to bear her cross.

bear (someone or something) in mind

- to remember and think about someone or something

We had to bear in mind that the child was only three years old.

bear (something) out or bear (out) something

- to prove that something is right

Always being late bore out the fact that the man could never continue with one job for a long time.

bear the brunt of (something)

- to withstand the worst part or the strongest part of something

The small island bore the brunt of the tropical storm.

bear with (someone or something)

- to be patient with someone or something, to endure someone or something

We had to bear with our teacher as she explained the material to the new students.

beat Idioms

beat a hasty retreat

- to retreat or withdraw very quickly

The soldiers beat a hasty retreat when the guerrillas attacked them.

beat a path to (someone's) door

- to come to someone in great numbers

The customers beat a path to the door of the new computer store.

beat around the bush

- to avoid discussing something directly, to speak indirectly, to evade an issue

"Stop beating around the bush and give us your final decision."

beat one's brains out

- to work very hard (to do something)

We beat our brains out in order to think of a name for the new magazine.

beat one's head against the wall

- to waste one's time trying to do something that is hopeless

I was beating my head against the wall to try and convince my friend to come to the restaurant.

beat (someone) to the draw

- to do something before others do it

I beat my friend to the draw and got the remaining tickets for the basketball game.

beat (someone) to the punch

- to do something before others do it

My friend beat me to the punch and arrived at the interview first.

beat (something) into (someone's) head

- to force someone to learn something

The teacher thinks that she must beat the material into the students' heads.

beat the clock

- to finish something before the time is up

The basketball team worked hard to beat the clock and win the game.

beat the living daylights out of (someone)

- to beat someone severely

The two men beat the living daylights out of the man at the gas station.

beat the pants off (someone)

- to beat someone severely, to win against someone easily in a race or a game

Our team beat the pants off the other team very easily.

beat the rap

- to escape conviction and punishment (for a crime)

The man beat the rap and did not have to go to jail.

beat the tar out of (someone)

- to beat someone severely

The older boy beat the tar out of the young boy in the schoolyard..

beat up (someone) or beat (someone) up

- to harm someone by hitting or beating them

The young boy beat up one of the older students.

Beat's me.

- I don't know.

a) "What time does the meeting start?"

b) "Beat's me."

become engaged to (someone)

- to make a plan to marry someone

My friend plans to become engaged to her boyfriend next month.

become engaged with (someone)

- to make a plan to marry someone

The girl has recently become engaged with her boyfriend.

become of (someone or something)

- to happen to someone or something

I do not know what became of my pencil.

I do not know what became of my friend from high school.

becoming on/to (someone)

- to make someone look good

The red dress looked very becoming on my girlfriend.

(no) bed of roses

- a situation that is happy and comfortable (usually used in the negative)

The new job was very difficult and certainly no bed of roses.

bee in one's bonnet

- to have an idea that continually occupies one's thoughts.

My friend has a bee in her bonnet about going to Europe next year.

beef up (something) or beef (something) up

- to make something stronger

The police beefed up the security around the convention site.

before long

- soon

I had to wait a few minutes but before long my friend arrived.

beg the question

- to invite the question that follows

Buying the expensive car begged the question of where the man got the money.

beg to differ with (someone)

- to politely disagree with someone

"I'm sorry, but I beg to differ with you about what happened."

begin to see the light

- to begin to understand (something)

My sister began to see the light and decided to leave her boyfriend.

behind closed doors

- in secret

The meeting to settle the dispute took place behind closed doors.

behind in (something)

- to be late with something

I was behind in my studies and stayed home all weekend to study.

The man is always behind in his reading.

behind on (something)

- to be late with bill payments

I was behind on my credit card payments.

behind schedule

- unable to do something by the time on the schedule, after the time on a schedule

The trains were behind schedule because of the accident early in the morning.

behind (someone's) back

- without someone's knowledge, secretly

The man is very angry because his friend borrowed his car behind his back.

behind the eight ball

- in a difficult situation from which you probably cannot escape

The man was now behind the eight ball and could not pay his loan.

behind the scenes

- privately, out of public view

The diplomats worked behind the scenes to try and solve the crisis.

behind the times

- old-fashioned

My aunt is behind the times.

belabor the point

- to spend too much time on a point of discussion

I tried not to belabor the point but I needed to explain things in detail for everyone to understand.

below average

- to be lower or worse than average

The amount of rain was below average during the winter.

believe in (someone)

- to trust or have confidence in someone

The manager believed in his staff and trusted them completely.

believe in (something)

- to favor something, to support something, to think that something is true

The man does not believe in flying saucers.

belt (something) out or belt out (something)

- to sing or play a song with lots of energy

The man stood up and belted out several songs.

bend (someone's) ear

- to talk to someone (sometimes annoying them)

I did not want to go into my supervisor's office and have him bend my ear for a long time.

bend over backwards (to do something)

- to try very hard to do something

"I will bend over backwards to help you get a job in this company."

bent on doing (something)

- to be determined to do something

The young boys are bent on buying the old car to fix it up.

beside oneself (with something)

- to be very upset or excited about something

The boy was beside himself with joy after winning the contest.

beside the point

- to have no connection with what is being discussed

"What you are saying is beside the point. We are not talking about salary now."

best bib and tucker

- one's best clothing

The man wore his best bib and tucker to the meeting.

best part of (something)

- to be almost all of something

We spent the best part of a day trying to fix the lamp.

bet on the wrong horse

- to misjudge a coming event, to misread the future

I think that my uncle bet on the wrong horse by investing all of his money in the new stock.

bet one's bottom dollar

- to be very certain about something

I would bet my bottom dollar that my friend will be late for the movie.

better off

- to be in a better situation than before

My friend would be better off if he sold his old car and bought a new one.

better part of (something)

- to be almost all of something

I spent the better part of an hour trying to fix the vacuum cleaner.

better safe than sorry

- it is better to be careful than to take risks

Better safe than sorry so I always leave early when I go to the airport.

better to be a live dog than a dead lion

- it is better to be a live coward than a dead hero (this is from Ecclesiastes in the Bible)

It is better to be a live dog than a dead lion so I walked away and did not try and fight with the man.

better to be the head of a dog than the tail of a lion

- it is better to be the leader of a small group than a follower of a bigger one

The young athlete always played for his hometown team rather than moving to a larger city with a bigger team. He thought that it was better to be the head of a dog than the tail of a lion.

between a rock and a hard place

- to be in a very difficult position

We are between a rock and a hard place in our effort to solve the problem.

between jobs

- to be unemployed

My friend is between jobs again. He lost his job last week.

between the devil and the deep blue sea

- to be in a very difficult position

The mayor was between the devil and the deep blue sea when he tried to keep the two groups happy.

betwixt and between

- to be undecided, to be between two decisions

We were betwixt and between in our effort to decide which school to send our child to.

beyond a shadow of a doubt

- to be completely without doubt

Everyone believes beyond a shadow of a doubt that the man stole the money.

beyond measure

- to be more than can be measured

The man's love for his city is beyond measure.

beyond one's depth

- to be beyond one's ability, to be in deep water

The apartment manager was beyond her depth in her effort to manage the apartment.

The swimmer was in deep water and very much beyond her depth.

beyond one's means

- to be more than one can afford

The expensive boat was beyond our means.

beyond the pale

- to be outside the bounds of acceptable behavior

What they are doing is unacceptable and beyond the pale.

beyond words

- to be more than one can say

The mother's love for her new baby is beyond words.

bid adieu to (someone or something)

- to say good-bye to someone or something

Everybody gathered to bid adieu to the popular supervisor.

bide one's time

- to patiently wait for an opportunity to occur.

The vice-president is biding his time as he waits to become president of the company.

big fish in a small pond

- an important person in a less important place

The woman was a big fish in a small pond when she moved to the small town.

big frog in a small pond

- an important person in a less important place

The manager is a big frog in a small pond in his company.

big of (someone)

- to be generous of someone

It was big of the man to share his house with the other people.

big shot

- an important and powerful person

The man is a big shot in the oil and gas industry.

bird in hand is worth two in the bush

- something that you already have is better than something that you might get

A bird in hand is worth two in the bush so we decided to sell the car rather than wait to get a higher price.

birds and the bees

- information about human sex and reproduction

The father tried to tell his son about the birds and the bees.

birds-eye view

- a view from high above, a brief look at something

We had a birds-eye view of the playing field from our seats high up in the stadium.

birthday suit

- a completely naked body

The little boy was running down the street in his birthday suit.

bit by bit

- gradually

I am finishing my school project bit by bit.

bite off more than one can chew

- to try to do more than one is able to do

I bit off more than I can chew by agreeing to do another assignment.

bite one's nails

- to be nervous or anxious about something

The children were biting their nails as they waited for the test results.

bite one's tongue

- to try not to say something that you really want to say

I had to bite my tongue and not tell our boss what happened.

bite (someone's) head off

- to speak angrily to someone

I am afraid to speak to my teacher because she may bite my head off.

bite the bullet

- to endure a difficult situation, to face a difficult situation bravely

I have decided to bite the bullet and begin to study for my Master's degree.

bite the dust

- to be killed, to break down, to be defeated

I think that my car will bite the dust soon.

bite the hand that feeds you

- to harm or oppose someone who does good things for you

The man is biting the hand that feeds him when he criticizes and fights against his boss.

bitter pill to swallow

- an unpleasant fact that one must accept

Losing the election was a bitter pill to swallow for the candidate.

black-and-blue

- bruised, showing signs of having been physically harmed

My arm was black-and-blue after falling down the stairs.

black out

- to faint or pass out

The young woman blacked out while she was standing in front of the computer.

black sheep of the family

- the worst member of a family

The boy was the black sheep of the family and nobody liked him.

blast off

- to shoot into the sky (used for a rocket)

The rocket blasted off at noon.

blaze a trail (in something)

- to create or develop a new area of study

The football player blazed a trail for the other players to follow with his unique skills.

bleep (something) out

- to replace a word in a radio or television broadcast with a musical tone (often used to bleep out a bad word)

The remarks of the coach were bleeped out during the television interview.

blessing in disguise

- something that turns out to be good but which seemed to be bad at first

The elderly woman was in very much pain and it was a blessing in disguise when she quietly passed away.

blind leading the blind

- someone who does not understand something but tries to explain it to others

It is like the blind leading the blind to watch the man try to explain how to operate the new computer.

blood on the carpet

- much trouble

There was much blood on the carpet after the meeting.

blood, sweat and tears

- signs of great personal effort

We put much blood, sweat and tears into building the house.

blow Idioms

blow a deal

- to ruin a business deal with someone

We are working hard so that we do not blow the deal with our new customer.

blow a fuse

- to burn out a fuse, to become angry

We replaced the old fuse when our house blew a fuse last night.

My friend blew a fuse when I told him that I had lost his book

blow-by-blow account/description

- a description or account that provides much detail

I gave my friend a blow-by-blow account of the game last night.

blow one's own horn

- to boast or praise oneself

My friend is always blowing his own horn and is very annoying at times.

blow one's stack

- to become very angry

The customer blew his stack when they refused to exchange his purchase at the store.

blow one's top

- to become very angry

The supervisor blew his top when the employee was late.

blow out (something) or blow (something) out

- to extinguish something by blowing

The little boy tried to blow out the candles.

blow over

- to die down, to calm down

The problem with the lost receipts has blown over and everybody is happy again.

blow (someone) away or blow away (someone)

- to overcome someone emotionally

The performance was so wonderful that it blew me away.

blow (someone's) cover

- to reveal someone's true identity or purpose

The police blew the secret detectives cover by mistake.

blow (someone's) mind

- to overwhelm or excite someone

The beauty of the African wildlife parks blew my mind during our holiday.

blow (someone or something) off

- to avoid someone, to not attend something

We blew off the chance to go to the general meeting.

blow (something)

- to fail at something, to ruin something

I think that I blew the final math exam last week.

blow (something) out of all proportion

- to make a bigger issue about something than it really is

The problem was very small but the manager blew it out of all proportion.

blow the lid off (something)

- to reveal something (often a wrongdoing)

The government investigation blew the lid off the illegal activities.

blow the whistle (on someone)

- to report someone's wrongdoing to the police or other authorities

The employee blew the whistle on the illegal practices of the company.

blow to smithereens

- to explode into tiny pieces

The gas tanker was blown to smithereens during the accident.

blow up (at someone)

- to get angry, to lose one's temper

The passenger who was waiting in the line blew up at the ticket agent.

blow up in (someone's) face

- to be ruined while one is working on it (a plan or project etc.), to explode suddenly

The secret plan blew up in our face when we discovered that everybody already knew about it.

The bomb blew up in the man's face.

blow up (something) or blow (something) up

- to inflate something, to fill something with air

The little boy likes to blow up balloons.

blow up (something) or blow (something) up

- to explode, to destroy something by explosion

The truck blew up after the accident.

blue blood

- someone from a noble or wealthy or aristocratic family

The art exhibition attracted many of the blue bloods in the town.

blue in the face

- to be exhausted and speechless

You can argue with him until you are blue in the face but you will never change his mind.

board a plane

- to enter a plane

I would like to board the plane early.

bog down

- to slow down and make no progress, to become stuck (a bog is an area of land that is wet and muddy - like a swamp)

I quickly became bogged down with all of the work that I had to do.

boggle (someone's) mind

- to confuse or overwhelm someone

The amount of waste in the city program really boggles my mind.

boil down to (something)

- to reduce something to its essential or main part

The reason that we could not go on a holiday boiled down to the fact that we had no money.

bolt down (something) or bolt (something) down

- to eat something very quickly

The man bolted down his food before going back to work.

bone of contention

- a reason for a quarrel, the subject of a fight

The family cottage was a major bone of contention after the father died.

bone up (on something)

- to study or review (something)

I decided to take a course at night to bone up on my Spanish.

book a hotel/flight/room

- to reserve a hotel/flight/room in advance

We booked a room for our holiday.

I plan to book a flight this weekend.

book (someone)

- to register someone as a suspect for a crime

The police booked the man for dangerous driving.

boot out (someone) or boot (someone) out

- to make someone leave, to get rid of someone

The boy was booted out of high school for smoking on the school grounds.

bore (someone) stiff

- to bore someone very much

Most of the guests at the wedding were bored stiff with the long speeches.

bore (someone) to death

- to bore someone very much

The movie bored me to death.

bore the pants off (someone)

- to frighten someone very badly

The new teacher bored the pants off the students.

born out of wedlock

- to be born to an unmarried mother

The young mother had two children who were born out of wedlock.

born with a silver spoon in one's mouth

- to be born rich, to have more than everything that you need since birth

The boy was born with a silver spoon in his mouth and has never worked in his life.

boss (someone) around or boss around (someone)

- to keep telling someone what to do, to be bossy toward someone

The little girl always wants to boss her friends around.

bottle (something) up or bottle up (something)

- to hold one's feelings inside of you

My aunt bottles up her feelings and has much stress because of it.

bottom line

- the result or final outcome of something, the last figure on a financial statement

Although I do not want to buy a new car, the bottom line is that I need a new car for work.

bottom out

- to reach the lowest point

The stock market bottomed out at its lowest level in many months.

bounce (something) off (someone)

- to test someone's reaction to an idea

I bounced my idea for a new restaurant off my friend.

bound and determined

- to be determined

The man's wife is bound and determined to visit her sister this summer.

bound for (somewhere)

- to be on the way somewhere or planning to go somewhere

My friend was bound for college when I last met him.

bound to (do something)

- to be certain to do something

"If you ask your father, he is bound to help you with your problem."

bow and scrape

- to be very humble and subservient

I was forced to bow and scrape to get some money from my parents.

bow out

- to quit, to resign from something

I wanted to join the tour but at the last minute I had to bow out.

bowl (someone) over or bowl over (someone)

- to surprise or overwhelm someone

The salesman bowled me over with his sales talk.

brand-new

- absolutely new

I was finally able to buy a brand-new car.

break Idioms

break a habit

- to end a habit

My sister worked very hard to break her habit of eating too much chocolate.

break a law

- to fail to obey a law

The young man broke the law when he drove his friend's car without a proper license.

break a record

- to set a new record that is better than an old one

The team tried hard to break a record during the last week of the season.

break camp

- to close down a campsite and move

We decided to break camp and begin on our journey.

break down

- to lose control of one's emotions, to have a nervous collapse

The woman broke down while the lawyer questioned her at the trial.

break down

- to stop working because of mechanical failure

The car broke down on the quiet road.

break down (something) or break (something) down

- to analyze something

We must break down these figures for further study.

break down (something) or break (something) down

- to divide into parts, to separate into simpler substances

We tried to break down the sentence for further study.

The sugar began to break down soon after it was swallowed.

break down (something) or break (something) down

- to explain something to someone in simple terms

My teacher broke down the scientific theory so that the class could understand it easily.

break even

- to have income equal to expenses

After only a few months our business began to break even and we started to make money.

break fresh/new ground

- to deal with something in a new way

The researchers were able to break fresh ground in their search for a cancer cure.

break ground for (something)

- to start digging the foundation for a building

The hospital will break ground for the new building soon.

break in (someone or something) or break (someone or something) in

- to train someone to do a job, to make something the right size or feel comfortable by wearing or using it

It took me a long time to break in my new shoes.

break into (someone's) conversation

- to interrupt someone who is speaking

The woman was very loud and kept breaking into our conversation.

break into tears

- to start crying suddenly

The woman broke into tears when she heard the bad news.

break loose (from someone or something)

- to get away from someone or something that is holding you

The horse broke loose from the rope and began running from the farm.

break new ground

- to enter a new area of discovery or knowledge

The researchers are breaking new ground in their research.

break off (something) or break (something) off

- to discontinue something, to terminate something

The two countries broke off their relations.

break one's word

- to not keep one's promise

The young child promised his parents that he would not break his word.

break out

- to become widespread suddenly

An influenza epidemic broke out last month.

A fire broke out in the old building.

break out in a cold sweat

- to perspire from fever or anxiety

I usually break out in a cold sweat when I have to make a speech.

break out in (something)

- to erupt in a rash or pimples

The girl usually breaks out in a rash when she eats shrimp.

break out of (something)

- to escape from something

Several prisoners tried to break out of prison last month.

break (someone's) fall

- to lessen the impact of a falling person

The baby fell out of the window but the bushes broke her fall.

break (something) to (someone)

- to tell bad news to someone

The man broke the bad news to his sister.

break the back of (something)

- to reduce the power of something

The company tried very hard to break the back of the union.

break the bank

- to win all the money at a casino gambling table

The man did not break the bank but he did win a lot of money.

break the ice

- to do or say something to ease tensions between people, to relax and start a conversation in a formal situation

Everybody at the party was very quiet until the host helped to break the ice.

break the news (to someone)

- to tell someone some information first

The manager will break the news about the job transfers tomorrow.

break through

- to make sudden progress by pushing through an obstacle

The university students worked very hard to break through with their research.

break up (something) or break (something) up

- to separate, to divide into groups or pieces, to put an end to something

Nobody wanted to break up their groups.

We usually break up into small groups during our class.

break up (with someone)

- to end a relationship with someone

My niece broke up with her boyfriend last June.

breath of fresh air

- a fresh and imaginative approach to something

The new coach was a breath of fresh air compared to the previous coach.

breathe down (someone's) neck

- to watch someone closely, to try to make someone hurry

The supervisor is always breathing down the necks of the employees.

breathe easy

- to relax after a stressful situation

I could breathe easy after I found my lost wallet.

breathe one's last

- to die

The woman breathed her last several days after she became ill.

brew a plot

- to make a plot

The generals in the small country were brewing a plot to take control of the government.

bright and early

- very early

The woman likes to get up bright and early every morning.

bright-eyed and bushy-tailed

- to be eager and cheerful

Everybody was bright-eyed and bushy-tailed when we started out on the trip.

brimming with (something)

- to be full of some kind of happy behavior

The children were brimming with energy on the morning of the circus.

bring Idioms

bring about (something) or bring (something) about

- to make something happen

The company president worked hard to bring about change in his company.

bring around (someone) or bring (someone) around

- to bring someone for a visit

I asked my friend to bring his new girlfriend around for a visit.

bring back (something) or bring (something) back

- to return an item that you bought or borrowed (used when you are speaking at the place where something is bought or borrowed)

My friend plans to bring back my book tomorrow.

bring down the house

- to cause much laughter in an audience

The comedian brought down the house with his jokes.

bring home the bacon

- to work and earn money for your family

My friend works hard to bring home the bacon for his family.

bring home the importance of (something) to (someone)

- to make someone understand that something is important

I tried to bring home the importance of the new company policy.

bring out (something) or bring (something) out

- to make something available, to introduce something to the public

The woman brought out some snacks for the children.

The computer company brought out a new computer last month.

bring some new facts to light

- to discover some new facts about something, to make some new facts about something known

The lawyer was able to bring some new facts to light in the trial of the killer.

bring (someone) around

- to bring someone back to consciousness

The medical staff helped to bring the man around after the accident.

bring (someone) around (to something)

- to change someone's mind about something, to convince or persuade someone about something

My friend did not agree with me at the start but I was able to bring him around later.

bring (someone) into line

- to persuade or force someone to agree with you

The woman was able to bring the disagreeing members of the committee into line.

bring (someone) to

- to wake someone up, to bring someone to consciousness

The doctor tried to bring the small boy to after he fell into the swimming pool.

bring (someone) up to speed

- to update someone with new information about something

The manager brought everybody up to speed about the new equipment.

bring (something) home to (someone) or bring home (something) to (someone) or bring home to (someone) (something)

- to cause someone to realize the truth or importance of something

The dry conditions are bringing home to the farmers the importance of saving water.

bring (something) into focus

- to make something clear

The lawyer helped to bring the problem into focus.

bring (something) into question

- to raise a question about something

The actions of our supervisor bring into question his interest in the case.

bring (something) into the open

- to reveal something, to expose something

The marriage counselor helped to bring the couple's problems into the open.

bring (something) off or bring off (something)

- to make something happen

The students tried hard to bring off a successful dance to collect money for their club.

bring (something) on or bring on (something)

- to cause something to develop rapidly

I do not know what brought on my friend's anger but I will avoid him until he calms down.

bring (something) to a head

- to cause something to reach a point where a decision or some action is necessary

The accident will bring the issue of safety to a head.

bring (something) to (someone's) attention

- to make someone aware of something

There was a mistake in the textbook which the student brought to the teacher's attention.

bring (something) to the table

- to have something to offer during a negotiation

We were able to bring a new offer to the table during the negotiations.

bring to mind

- to recall something

The woman's acting brought to mind some of the great actresses of the past.

bring up (a child)

- to raise or care for a child

My sister is bringing up three children.

bring up (a subject)

- to introduce a subject into a discussion

They brought up the subject of taxes at the meeting but nobody in the government wanted to talk about it.

bring up the rear

- to be at the end of the line or in the last position

The youngest runner was bringing up the rear in the school relay race.

broad in the beam

- to have wide hips or large buttocks

The woman in the store was rather broad in the beam.

broke

- to have no money

I spent all of my money on my holiday and I am now broke.

brush up on (something)

- to review something that one has already learned

I am going to brush up on my English before my trip to New York.

a brush with death

- a near-death experience

The man had a brush with death in the car accident.

a brush with the law

- a brief encounter or experience with the police because of a crime

The man had a brush with the law when he was young but now he is totally honest.

buck for (something)

- to aim or try for a goal

The soldier was bucking for a promotion.

buckle down and do (something)

- to make a big effort to do something, to give one's complete attention or effort to do something

I have to buckle down and study or I will fail the exam.

bug (someone)

- to irritate or bother someone

The boy's rude behavior is beginning to bug me.

build a fire under (someone)

- to stimulate someone to do something

We keep trying to build a fire under our friend but he refuses to study or look for a job.

build castles in the air/in Spain

- to make plans that are impossible

The girl is always building castles in the air and none of her plans have any chance to succeed.

build (something) to order

- to make something especially for a customer

The family wanted to build their kitchen table to order.

build up (someone or something) or build (someone or something) up

- to make someone or something bigger or stronger, to promote someone or something

The woman is always trying to build up her boss.

build up to (something)

- to lead up to something

Things were building up to be a very serious problem.

bull in a china shop

- someone who is clumsy and upsets other people or plans

Our boss was like a bull in a china shop when I saw him at the meeting last week.

bump into (someone)

- to meet someone by chance

I bumped into my friend at the department store yesterday.

bump off (someone) or bump (someone) off

- to kill someone

The criminal gang bumped off the leader of the other gang.

bump (someone) up

- to upgrade someone's flight or room or car rental etc.

They bumped me up to first class for my flight.

bundle of nerves

- a very nervous or anxious person

The woman is a bundle of nerves after looking after her three children.

bundle up

- to put on warm clothes, to dress warmly

We bundled up and went for a walk in the park.

burn Idioms

burn a hole in one's pocket

- to stimulate someone to spend money quickly

I got paid today and the money is burning a hole in my pocket.

burn down

- to burn completely (usually used for buildings)

My neighbor's house burned down last night.

burn one's bridges behind one

- to do something that makes going back impossible

The man burned his bridges behind him and is unable to work in the same industry again.

burn (oneself) out

- to become very tired and almost sick from doing something for a long time or from working too hard

After working long hours for many months the woman finally burned herself out.

burn out

- to stop working because of overuse

The light bulb is burned out.

burn (someone) in effigy

- to burn a dummy that represents a hated person

The crowd of people burned the Prime Minister in effigy.

burn the candle at both ends

- to work or play too hard without enough rest

The man has been burning the candle at both ends with his work and he is now sick.

burn the midnight oil

- to study until very late at night

We burned the midnight oil for three nights in order to study for the exam.

burn up

- to burn completely (usually things and not buildings)

The uniforms burned up in the fire.

burst at the seams

- to explode with pride or laughter, to be full to the breaking point

The train was bursting at the seams as it entered the station.

I was bursting at the seams from laughter.

burst in on (someone or something)

- to enter a room and interrupt someone or some activity

The woman burst in on the meeting just as it started.

burst into flames

- to catch fire suddenly

The curtains burst into flames after touching the stove.

burst into tears

- to begin to cry suddenly

The parents burst into tears of happiness when their daughter graduated.

burst onto the scene

- to appear suddenly in some location

The young singer burst onto the scene when she was a teenager.

burst out

- to leave quickly, to depart quickly

The girl became angry and burst out of the room.

burst out crying/laughing/singing

- to begin to cry/laugh/sing suddenly

We burst out laughing when the man screamed after seeing the mouse.

The little boy burst out crying in the restaurant.

burst with joy

- to be full of happiness and feel that you will explode or burst

My grandmother burst with joy when she saw her new baby granddaughter.

burst with pride

- to be full of pride and ready to burst

The girl's parents were bursting with pride at the graduation ceremony.

bury one's head in the sand

- to refuse to see something, to know something unpleasant but not want to deal with it

The man always buries his head in the sand and never wants to hear about family problems.

bury the hatchet

- to stop arguing and become friendly with someone

My friend buried the hatchet with his brother and they are now friendly again.

business as usual

- to continue as usual

It was business as usual for the small store after the fire destroyed the shopping area.

busman's holiday

- a holiday where you spend your time doing the same thing that you would do if you were working
The doctor felt that he was on a busman's holiday when everyone at the meeting began to ask him about their medical problems.

busy as a beaver

- to be very busy

I have been as busy as a beaver all morning.

but for (someone or something)

- if it were not for someone or something

The man would have easily got the new job, but for the fact that he was not honest about his previous experience.

butt heads with (someone)

- to quarrel or argue about something with someone

The man often butts heads with his boss during a meeting.

butt in (on someone or something)

- to interrupt someone or something

I do not like that woman because she always butts in on our conversation while we are talking.

butter (someone) up or butter up (someone)

- to flatter someone

The man is trying to butter up his boss so that he can leave early on Friday.

button one's lip

- to become quiet, to not speak

I decided to button my lip rather than give my opinion of our supervisor.

buy a lemon

- to buy something that is worthless or does not work well

The used car that I bought is not very good. I think that I bought a lemon.

buy a pig in a poke

- to buy something without seeing it or knowing anything about it

It is like buying a pig in a poke if you buy that car without first inspecting it.

buy into (something)

- to accept and agree with something

I do not buy into my friend's idea about starting a business.

buy off (someone) or buy (someone) off

- to bribe someone

The union tried to buy off the politician.

buy out (someone or something) or buy (someone or something) out

- to purchase a business or a company, to buy all of someone's shares in a company

The large company wants to buy out the small company.

The company plans to buy out the president.

buy (something) for a song

- to buy something cheaply

We were able to buy the boat for a song.

buy (something) on credit

- to buy something now and pay for it later

We decided to buy the computer on credit because we did not have much money.

buy (something) sight unseen

- to buy something without seeing it first

My sister made a big mistake when she bought the used car sight unseen.

buy up (something) or buy (something) up

- to buy the total amount of something
The customers bought up all of the products.

buyer's market

- a situation where there are more sellers than buyers of a product or service and the buyers have an advantage

It was a buyer's market and the price of fruit was very cheap.

by Idioms

by a hair

- just barely, by a very small amount

I only passed the exam by a hair.

by a mile

- by a great distance

The runner won the race by a mile.

by a whisker

- just barely, by a very small amount

The marathon runner won the race by a whisker.

by all accounts

- from all reports, from what everyone is saying

By all accounts, the new manager is a very good person.

by all appearances

- apparently, according to what one sees

By all appearances, the small car was the cause of the accident.

by all means

- certainly, yes

"By all means, I will come to dinner next week."

by and by

- before long, after some time has passed

By and by, all of the family moved back to the city.

by and large

- generally, on the whole

By and large, we had a good meeting even though it was very short.

by any means

- by any way possible

We need to find a computer by any means.

by chance

- without planning

By chance, I saw my father's friend in the supermarket.

by far

- greatly, by a great margin

The man is by far the smartest person in his company.

by fits and starts

- irregularly, with many stops and starts

By fits and starts the company was able to begin business.

by heart

- by memorizing

The boy knows the poem by heart.

by hook or by crook

- in any way necessary

My sister wants to go to Italy next year by hook or by crook.

by leaps and bounds

- rapidly, by large movements forward

The construction of the new airport is progressing by leaps and bounds.

by means of

- with the use of something

We were able to enter the old building by means of a small window in the back.

by no means

- absolutely not

By no means will I permit my child to play the new video game.

by the book

- according to the rules

The police officer does everything by the book when he arrests someone.

by the day

- one day at a time

My father was very sick but now he is getting better by the day.

by the dozen

- twelve at a time

We usually buy bottles of water by the dozen.

by the handful

- in measurements equal to a handful

We were eating fresh blueberries by the handful.

by the hour

- after each hour, one hour at a time

We had to pay for our parking space by the hour.

by the month

- one month at a time

The rent for the apartment is paid by the month.

by the nape of the neck

- by the back of the neck

The dog liked to be picked up by the nape of the neck.

by the same token

- similarly, for the same reason

"By the same token, I do not want to go downtown again today."

by the seat of one's pants

- by luck and with very little skill

I was able to complete the course by the seat of my pants.

by the skin of one's teeth

- by a very small margin, barely

I arrived at the train station and was on time by the skin of my teeth.

by the sweat of one's brow

- by hard work

The farmer managed to make enough money to buy the farm by the sweat of his brow.

by the way

- incidentally

"By the way, could you please bring your computer tomorrow."

by the week

- one week at a time

We rented the car by the week.

by the year

- one year at a time

The contract for the garbage pickup is renewed by the year.

by virtue of (something)

- because of something

My father got his new job by virtue of his volunteer work in the community.

by way of (something)

- as a substitute for something, as a form or example of something

By way of introduction the man gave everyone his business card.

by way of (something or somewhere)

- passing through or by a place

We drove to the airport by way of the small town.

by word of mouth

- by speaking rather than writing

We learned about the party by word of mouth.

C

calculated risk

- an action that may fail but has a good chance to succeed

The company took a calculated risk when they opened a new store in a very quiet area.

call Idioms

call a loan

- to demand the immediate and complete payment of a debt/loan

The bank recently called the loan of the small business.

call a meeting

- to request that a meeting be held

The board of directors will call a meeting for next week.

call a meeting to order

- to officially start a meeting

The president called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

call a spade a spade

- to speak bluntly

The supervisor called a spade a spade when he criticized the employee for being lazy.

call for (someone)

- to come and get someone

"Could you please call for me before you go to the game."

call for (someone or something)

- to require something, to need the services of someone

Our problems with the toilet call for a good plumber.

call in sick

- to phone one's workplace to tell them that you are sick and cannot work

My friend called in sick and will not work today.

call in (someone) or call (someone) in

- to ask someone for help, to call for special advice

We called in a doctor to look at the patient.

call in (something) or call (something) in

- to collect something for payment, to withdraw something from circulation

The bank decided to call in the business loan.

call it a day

- to finish work and go home

I called it a day and decided to go home early.

call it a night

- to finish work and go home

We worked until very late and then called it a night.

call it even

- to cancel someone's debt or something similar because he or she has already returned something equal in value

My friend owed me some money. However, he helped me to fix my computer so I decided to call it even and forget about the money.

call it quits

- to stop, to finish

I called it quits and went home for the day.

call of nature

- the need to go to the toilet

The driver stopped his truck to answer the call of nature.

call off (something) or call (something) off

- to cancel something

They called off the game because of the rain.

call off the dogs or call the dogs off

- to stop threatening or chasing or hounding someone

The police decided to call the dogs off and stop hunting for the man.

call on (someone)

- to visit someone

I plan to call on my brother during my holidays.

call on (someone)

- to ask someone to participate in something or contribute something

The teacher called on me three times to answer questions in the class.

call on (someone) to speak

- to ask someone to speak, to give someone permission to speak at a meeting

The chairman called on me to speak at the meeting.

call out to (someone)

- to shout to someone

We called out to our friend at the concert but she did not hear us.

call (someone) names

- to call a person unpleasant names

The children began to call the new student names.

call (someone) on the carpet

- to call someone before an authority to be scolded or reprimanded

The salesman was called on the carpet by his boss for losing the big sale.

call (someone's) bluff

- to challenge someone to prove that what they are saying is true

I decided to call the man's bluff and I asked him to show me the evidence.

call (someone or something) into question or call into question (someone or something)

- to dispute or cast doubt upon someone or something

The lawyer called the man's statement about his neighbor into question.

call (something) garbage

- to not believe something, to dislike something

My friend called my ideas garbage.

call the shots

- to be in charge, to give orders

The vice-president is now calling the shots and is in control of the company.

call up a document

- to find a computer document and put it on a computer screen
I had to call up the document as I was talking on the telephone.

call up (someone) or call (someone) up

- to telephone someone

My friend said that he will call up his parents tomorrow night.

calm down

- to relax

The woman calmed down after the accident.

can of worms

- a complicated situation or problem

The lawsuit opened up a can of worms for the company.

cancel (something) out or cancel out (something)

- to destroy or wipe out the effect of something

The overeating by the girl cancelled out the benefits of her exercise.

can't do anything about (someone or something)

- to be unable to manage or control someone or something

I cannot do anything about the noise in our office.

can't do anything with (someone or something)

- to be unable to manage or control someone or something

My sister is always complaining that she can't do anything with her hair.

can't see the forest for the trees

- to be unable to understand the whole picture of something because you are only looking at small parts of it

Our boss has no understanding of most problems because he can't see the forest for the trees.

can't stand (someone or something)

- to dislike someone or something very much

My uncle cannot stand his daughter's boyfriend.

can't stomach (someone or something)

- to dislike someone or something very much

I cannot stomach the idea of another week of work before my holiday.

cap and gown

- the academic cap and the gown that is worn during graduation ceremonies

Everybody was wearing their cap and gown for the university graduation ceremonies.

card up one's sleeve

- a plan or argument that is kept back to be used later if needed

I think that our boss has a card up his sleeve and he will help us later.

cards are stacked against (someone)

- luck is against someone

The cards have been stacked against the young boy since he was born.

(in) care of (someone)

- (send something) to one person at the address of another person

I sent the parcel to my sister in care of her friend.

carrot and stick

- a reward or a threat of punishment at the same time

The trade negotiators took a carrot-and-stick approach to the automobile talks.

carried away

- to lose one's control or judgement because of strong feelings

I got carried away and began yelling at my friend after he lost my textbook.

carry Idioms

carry a lot of weight with (someone or something)

- to be very influential with someone or with a group of people

The man's education and experience carry a lot of weight in the university.

carry a tune

- to be able to sing accurately, to have musical ability

The girl in the music class cannot carry a tune.

carry coals to Newcastle

- to bring something of which you have much of somewhere, to duplicate something (Newcastle is a town in England where there is much coal)

Bringing extra food to the farmer's picnic was like bringing coals to Newcastle.

carry on

- to continue, to keep doing something as before

We were permitted to carry on with the party after we talked to our apartment manager.

carry on

- to conduct, to hold

I tried hard to carry on a conversation in the noisy restaurant.

carry out (something) or carry (something) out

- to do something, to put something (a plan) into action, to accomplish something

We were able to carry out the move with no problems.

carry over (something) or carry (something) over

- to save something for another time or location

The store will carry over the sale until next week.

carry the ball

- to be in charge of something

The vice-president was asked to carry the ball while the president was away.

carry the day

- to win or be successful

The sales manager's fine performance carried the day for us.

carry the torch

- to show loyalty to a cause or a person

The mayor has been carrying the torch for the candidate for a long time.

carry the weight of the world on one's shoulders

- to appear to be burdened by all the problems of the world

My aunt feels that she is working too hard and that she is carrying the weight of the world on her shoulders.

carry through with (something)

- to put a plan into action

The company carried through with its plan to open a new factory.

carve out a niche

- to create a speciality or product or market that nobody else has

The company was able to carve out a niche for their product among university students.

a case in point

- an example that proves something or helps to make something clear

What our boss said is a case in point about what I have also been saying.

a case of mistaken identity

- an incorrect identification of someone

It was a case of mistaken identity when the police arrested the wrong person.

cash-and-carry

- a system where you pay cash for some goods and then carry or take them away

The supermarkets in our city operate on a cash-and-carry basis.

cash cow

- a good source of money

The new business is a cash cow and is making much money.

cash in (something) or cash (something) in

- to exchange something for money

We will cash in the coupons because we need some money.

cash in on (something)

- to make a lot of money at something

The small city cashed in on their success after the winter Olympics.

cash on the barrelhead

- to pay cash to buy something

We were forced to pay cash on the barrelhead for everything at the store.

cast Idioms**cast a vote**

- to vote for something

I cast a vote in the election for a new class president.

cast about for (someone or something)

- to look for someone or something

The man has been casting about for a new job for a long time.

cast around for (someone or something)

- to look for someone or something

We are casting around for a new secretary in our company.

cast aspersions on (someone)

- to make insulting remarks about someone

The woman is always casting aspersions on her colleagues at work.

cast doubts on (someone or something)

- to cause someone or something to be doubted or not believed

The first witness at the trial cast doubts on what the main witness said.

cast in the same mold

- to be very similar

The two sisters were cast in the same mold and were almost identical.

cast one's lot in with (someone)

- to join with someone and accept whatever happens - good or bad

The woman cast her lot in with the new company and worked hard to make it a success.

cast one's vote

- to vote

We arrived early to cast our vote in the election.

cast pearls before swine

- to waste something valuable on someone who does not appreciate it

Giving the woman the gold earrings was like casting pearls before swine.

cast the first stone

- to be the first to attack someone, to be quick to blame or criticize or punish others

I told my friend that she should look at herself and her bad points rather than cast the first stone and criticize her friend.

castles in the air

- daydreams

My sister is always building castles in the air and is very unrealistic.

cat burglar

- a burglar who enters a building by climbing a wall etc.

A cat burglar entered our apartment and stole our television.

cat gets one's tongue

- the inability to say something

The cat got our supervisor's tongue and she did not say anything during the meeting.

a cat has nine lives

- cats can survive accidents that would kill most animals

The boy never becomes injured. He is like a cat with nine lives.

a cat in gloves catches no mice

- if you are too careful and polite you may not get what you want

A cat in gloves catches no mice and I advised my friend that he should be more aggressive at work or he will not be successful.

catch Idioms

catch-22

- a situation in which whatever decision is made the outcome will have negative consequences, a basically no-win situation

It is a catch-22 situation. If I go to work there will be problems but if I do not go to work there will also be problems.

catch a cold

- to become sick with a cold

I caught a cold because of the rain and the cold weather.

catch-as-catch-can

- in any way possible

We are in the middle of moving house so our meals are catch-as-catch-can.

catch fire

- to begin to burn

We were very careful that the wooden house would not catch fire.

catch forty winks

- to get some sleep

I was very tired so I decided to catch forty winks.

catch on

- to understand something, to learn about something

I was finally able to catch on and understand the math problem.

catch on

- to become popular

Recently, ballroom dancing has begun to catch on with many people.

catch one's breath

- to stop to rest and regain one's normal breathing

After running from the station it took me a moment to catch my breath.

catch sight of (someone or something)

- to see someone or something briefly

The police could not catch sight of the robber after the robbery.

catch some Z's

- to get some sleep

I needed to catch some Z's after working hard all weekend.

catch (someone's) eye

- to attract someone's attention

I tried to catch my friend's eye but she did not notice me.

catch (someone) in the act of (doing something)

- to catch someone doing something illegal or private

The police caught the politician in the act of taking money from the business owner.

catch (someone) napping

- to find someone asleep, to find someone unprepared for something

The boss caught the employee napping and became very angry.

catch (someone) off balance

- to surprise someone who is not prepared

We were caught off balance when we discovered that we had no business license.

catch (someone) off guard

- to catch a person at a time of carelessness

I was caught off guard when the teacher asked me about my homework.

catch (someone) red-handed

- to find someone in the middle of doing something wrong

The clerk caught the boy red-handed when he was stealing the candy.

catch up on (something)

- to do something that you have not had time to do, to learn about something (the daily news or news about old friends)

I need to catch up on some of my reading this weekend.

I met my friend and we caught up on some news.

catch up with (someone or something)

- to become even with someone (in a race or in schoolwork etc.)

I think that it is too late to catch up with the rest of the class.

caught in the crossfire

- to be caught between two opposing people or groups so it is difficult to remain neutral

The family was caught in the crossfire between the police and the criminals.

caught in the middle

- to be caught between two opposing people or groups so it is difficult to remain neutral

I was caught in the middle when my friend and his girlfriend began to fight.

caught short

- to not have enough of something (usually money) when you need it

I was caught short last month and could not pay my credit card bill.

caught unaware

- to be surprised and unprepared for something

Everybody was caught unaware by the change in government policy.

cause a stir

- to cause people to become agitated and alarmed about something

The soccer player caused a stir when he criticized the referee.

cause eyebrows to raise

- to shock people

I caused eyebrows to raise when I did not accept the award from my company.

cause tongues to wag

- to give people something to gossip or talk about

The woman caused tongues to wag when she came to the party without her husband.

cave in to (someone or something)

- to surrender one's opposition to someone or something

The company caved in to the union's demand for more money.

chalk (something) up to (something)

- to recognize something as the cause of something else

We were able to chalk our success up to our new boat.

chalk up (something) or chalk (something) up

- to record something

The stock prices of the company chalked up a big increase last week.

champ at the bit

- to be ready and anxious to do something

Everybody was champing at the bit to start taking the exam.

chance (something)

- to risk doing something

We did not want to chance driving during the storm so we stayed home.

chance upon (someone or something)

- to find someone or something by chance

I chanced upon a very interesting book during my trip.

change hands

- to be transferred from one person to another

The pizza restaurant changed hands many times during the last several years.

change horses in midstream

- to make new plans or choose a new leader in the middle of an important activity

The company changed horses in midstream and totally changed their policy.

change of heart

- a change in the way one feels about something

The woman had a change of heart and let her child go to the circus.

change of pace

- a temporary change in one's routine

We decided to go to the lake for a change of pace and to get away from our busy schedules.

change of scenery

- a move to a different place where things are different

My sister and her husband have decided to move because they want a change of scenery.

change one's mind

- to change one's decision

My friend changed his mind and will not go to the movie tonight.

change one's tune

- to make a change in one's story/statement/opinion/policy

Our supervisor has changed his tune and agrees that we need to do things differently.

change the subject

- to begin talking about something different

I tried to change the subject when my friend began to talk about the money that I owed him.

in charge of (something)

- to be responsible for an activity or group of people

Our teacher is in charge of selling tickets for the school dance.

charm the pants off (someone)

- to use very nice or charming behavior to persuade someone to do something

I was able to charm the pants off the man in the job interview and I got the job.

cheat on (someone)

- to be unfaithful to someone

The man began cheating on his wife which was the cause of their divorce.

check in (at an airport)

- to go to an airport and talk to an airline agent before boarding an airplane

We arrived at the airport and checked in early.

check into (a motel/hotel)

- to register at a motel or hotel

We arrived at the hotel and then checked in.

check on (someone or something)

- to examine someone or something in order to determine the condition of it/him/her
We always check on our baby before we go to sleep.

check one's luggage

- to give your luggage to an airline agent in return for a luggage claim ticket
I checked my luggage and went to wait for my flight.

check out (of a motel/hotel)

- to pay the bill at a motel or hotel and then leave
We ate breakfast and then we checked out of the hotel.

check out (something) or check (something) out

- to investigate something, to examine something
We went to the apartment building to check out the new apartment.

check over (something) or check (something) over

- to look at something carefully to see if there are any problems or mistakes
I checked over my essay before I gave it to the teacher.

check up on (someone or something)

- to examine someone or something in order to determine the condition of it/him/her
We must check up on my mother because she has been very sick recently.

cheek by jowl

- side by side, in close intimacy
The fans entered the stadium cheek by jowl.

cheek-to-cheek

- with one person's cheek pressed up against another person's cheek
The couple was dancing cheek-to-cheek.

the cheek to (do something)

- rudeness, impudence
The woman had the cheek to tell me that she was sick and could not work today.

cheer on (someone) or cheer (someone) on

- to encourage someone who is trying to do something
Everybody came to the stadium to cheer on the home team.

cheer (someone) up or cheer up (someone)

- to make a sad person happy
We took our friend to a nice restaurant to cheer her up.

chew out (someone) or chew (someone) out

- to scold someone roughly
The teacher chewed out the student for talking in class.

chew the fat

- to chat
The two men were chewing the fat in front of the house.

chicken feed

- a small amount of money
The man sold his car for chicken feed.

chicken out (of something)

- to stop doing something because of fear
I chickened out of jumping into the lake from the high diving board.

(one's) chickens have come home to roost

- one's words or actions have come back to cause trouble for someone
The girl's chickens have come home to roost and now she must take responsibility for her actions.

chilled to the bone

- very cold
I was chilled to the bone when I came in from the rain.

chime in

- to join in a song or conversation

We were having a nice conversation until our friend chimed in and started complaining about things.

chip in

- to contribute to something, to pay jointly for something

We chipped in and bought our father a birthday present.

chip off the old block

- a person who looks or acts like one of his parents

The boy is a chip off the old block and acts exactly like his father.

chip on one's shoulders

- a tendency to try to argue or get into a conflict with others

The man has a chip on his shoulders and wants to fight with everybody.

chips are down

- the time when one faces the greatest obstacles

When the chips are down the boy goes to his father for help.

chisel (someone) out of (something)

- to cheat someone to get money

My friend tried to chisel his brother out of some money.

choke (someone) up or choke up (someone)

- to make someone cry or become overemotional and speechless

The story of the boy's illness choked the woman up.

choke (something) off or choke off (something)

- to force something to an end or to a stop

The government was able to choke off the flow of money to the criminal gang.

choose sides

- to choose from a group of people or players to be on opposing sides of a debate/fight/game

We had to choose sides before we played the game.

circle the wagons

- to set up a defense against an enemy

The managers began to circle the wagons as the accounting scandal became worse.

claim a life

- to take the life of someone

The accident on the freeway claimed the life of two people.

clam up

- to stop talking

The girl clammed up when her boyfriend entered the room.

clamp down on (someone or something)

- to become strict with someone or about something

The police are going to clamp down on drivers who drive too fast.

clean bill of health

- the assurance that an animal or person is healthy

The astronaut was given a clean bill of health before he began training.

clean out (someone) or clean (someone) out

- to rob someone of almost everything, to steal almost everything from someone

The robber entered the store at night and cleaned out the owners.

clean out (something) or clean (something) out

- to empty something, to tidy something by removing something

We spent the day trying to clean out our garage.

clean slate

- a record that shows no bad behavior or other problems from the past

The man started with a clean slate after he lost his previous job.

clean up one's act

- to improve one's performance

The mayor will have to clean up his act if he wants to get elected again.

clear Idioms

clear a hurdle

- to overcome an obstacle (from a hurdle in a track and field race)

We finally cleared a major hurdle in our effort to get a business license to sell our products.

clear away (something) or clear (something) away

- to remove the contents of something, to take something away

The parks department began to clear away the old trees in the field.

clear-cut

- clearly stated, clear and certain

The boy gave a clear-cut answer to the question.

clear of (something)

- to be not touching something

We checked that the ladder was clear of the electrical wires before we painted the house.

clear out (of somewhere)

- to leave, to get out (usually quickly or abruptly)

We cleared out of the building when our class was finished.

clear out (something) or clear (something) out

- to clean somewhere, to remove something

We cleared out the room before we started to paint.

clear sailing

- to be an easy situation

It was clear sailing after we finished work and began our holiday.

clear (someone's) name

- to prove that someone is not guilty of something

The man tried very hard to clear his name regarding his past criminal activity.

clear the air

- to calm down and remove bad feelings

We tried to clear the air after our argument.

clear the decks

- to clear away things and prepare for action, to get out of the way

"Let's clear the decks and get everyone out of the house so that we can begin work."

clear the table

- to remove the dishes and eating utensils from a table

After we finished eating we cleared the table.

clear up

- to become sunny

It stopped raining and cleared up this morning.

clear up (something) or clear (something) up

- to solve or explain (a problem etc.)

We cleared up the problem that we were having with our computers.

click on (something)

- to move a computer mouse or cursor to someplace on a computer screen and then click on it

I clicked on the link to open the new page.

cliffhanger

- a sports event or movie or election where the outcome is uncertain until the very end

The playoff game was a cliffhanger and the most exciting game of the year.

climb on the bandwagon

- to join a popular activity or campaign

Many students climbed on the bandwagon to raise money for the school orchestra.

climb out of the gutter

- to improve one's position or situation

The man was able to climb out of the gutter and begin to solve his problems.

climb the wall

- to be so bored that you become anxious and frustrated

The woman began to climb the wall after only a few days at her new job.

clip joint

- a low-class business where people are cheated

The men went into a clip joint near the bus station and had to pay a lot of money.

clip (someone's) wings

- to limit someone's activities or possibilities

The company decided to clip the manager's wings and will take away his expense account.

cloak-and-dagger

- involving secrecy and plotting

The spy was involved in some cloak-and-dagger operations.

close Idioms

close a deal

- to end a negotiation successfully

We had to work hard but we were finally able to close the deal.

close at hand

- to be within reach

The day that the new coach will be chosen is now close at hand.

close call

- an accident or incident that almost happens but does not happen

I had a close call this morning when the truck almost hit me.

close in on (someone or something)

- to overwhelm or surround someone or something

The soldiers quickly closed in on the enemy position.

close-mouthed

- uncommunicative, secretive

The man was close-mouthed about why he quit his job.

close one's eyes to (something)

- to ignore something

The teacher closed her eyes to the misbehavior of the students.

close ranks

- to come together for fighting, to unite and work together

The political parties closed ranks and stopped arguing among themselves.

close shave

- an accident or incident that almost happens but does not happen

I had a close shave when I almost missed my airplane flight.

close the books (on someone or something)

- to put an end to something (like closing the books in accounting records)

The city closed the books on the idea of building a new stadium.

close to home

- to be close to someone's personal feelings or wishes or interests

My statement about the woman's work habits hit close to home and she became very quiet.

close to (someone)

- to be fond of someone and have a good relationship with him or her

The boy is very close to his grandfather.

cloud up

- to become cloudy

It began to cloud up and soon started raining.

clue (someone) in or clue in (someone)

- to inform someone about something

We tried to clue the principal in about why the students were absent.

the coast is clear

- no danger is in sight, no one can see you

When the coast is clear we will try to enter the building.

coat and tie

- a jacket or a sports coat and a necktie

The company asked everyone to wear a coat and tie to the company dinner.

cock-and-bull story

- a story that is not true

The boys gave us a cock-and-bull story about the tire marks in front of our house.

cog in the machine

- a small and unimportant part of a large organization

The employees felt like they were only cogs in the machine so the atmosphere at the company was not very good.

cold comfort

- no comfort at all

The government offered money to the victims of the fire but it was cold comfort to those who had lost their families.

cold fish

- a cold and unfeeling person

The man was a cold fish and cared little about his family.

cold snap/spell

- a sudden short period of cold weather

The cold snap lasted for five days.

cold turkey

- the immediate and complete withdrawal from something on which one has become dependent (can be used for drugs such as heroin or things like tobacco)

The woman stopped using drugs cold turkey.

come Idioms**come a cropper**

- to fail

I think that the man will come a cropper in the chess tournament.

come a long way

- to make great progress

The manager has come a long way and has learned many things about his new company.

come about

- to happen

Everybody believes that the plans for the new community center will never come about.

come across (someone or something)

- to find something or meet someone by chance

I came across an interesting story in the newspaper last week.

Come again.

- Please repeat or say that again.

"Come again. I did not hear you the first time."

come alive

- to brighten up and become active

The girl suddenly came alive and began to enjoy the party.

come along

- to make progress, to thrive

The work on our new house is coming along very well.

come apart at the seams

- to be in a bad situation and to begin to lose control, to become extremely upset

Our team is coming apart at the seams since our coach left.

The man is coming apart at the seams since he lost his job.

come around

- to finally agree to something, to return to consciousness or wake up

My father finally came around and agreed to let me go to Europe to study.

come as no surprise

- to not be surprising

It came as no surprise that the government decided to have an election.

come away empty-handed

- to return without anything

The man came away empty-handed after shopping all morning.

come back

- to return to the place where you are now

My cousin came back from her holidays last week.

come back (into fashion)

- to become popular again

Recently, bell-bottom pants have come back into fashion.

come back (to someone)

- to return to one's memory

The strange events of last year are slowly coming back to me.

come between (two people)

- to disrupt the relationship between (two people)

The mother's constant interfering finally came between the man and his wife.

come by (something)

- to get or obtain or acquire something

My aunt came by much money recently and is now enjoying her life.

come clean

- to tell the truth, to confess something

The president of the company was forced to come clean and tell the truth about the problems.

a come-down

- a lowering in status or income or influence or energy

My friend's new job is a come-down from her last one and she is not very happy.

come down hard on (someone)

- to scold or punish someone severely

The police are coming down hard on drunk drivers now.

come down in the world

- to lose one's social position

My father came down in the world when he decided to change jobs.

come down to earth

- to stop imagining or dreaming about things

My friend has finally come down to earth and is seriously looking for a job.

come down to (something)

- to be reduced to something

The man's decision about the job came down to how it would affect his family.

come down with (something)

- to become sick with a cold or other illness

My mother came down with a cold and was unable to attend the dinner.

come from (somewhere)

- to originate from somewhere, to be a native of a place

Several of the new students come from Mexico.

come from far and wide

- to come from many different places

The people came from far and wide to hear the new band.

come from nowhere

- to come as a surprise and with no warning

The truck came from nowhere as we were driving along the road.

come full circle

- to be completely opposite from one's starting point

The university has come full circle with its policy on new students.

come hell or high water

- no matter what happens

Come hell or high water, I plan to go to the concert next week.

come home to (someone)

- to become apparent to someone

It suddenly came home to the young family that their house had been destroyed in the fire.

come in a close second

- to almost be chosen first for something

The politician came in a close second in the election.

come in handy

- to be useful or convenient

I think that the small hammer will come in handy to fix the desk.

come in high

- to charge too much for your services, to ask for a price that is too high

The salesman came in high during the negotiations and could not sell his product.

come in low

- to offer a low amount of money for a product or service

The company came in low with an offer for our product.

come into fashion

- to become fashionable

These days bright colors have come into fashion.

come into one's own

- to begin to perform or work well because of good circumstances

The basketball player has come into his own since he changed positions.

come into (some money)

- to get possession of some money, to inherit some money

The man came into much money which he later donated to charity.

come of age

- to be old enough to vote or marry or sign legal contracts etc.

When my classmates came of age most of them started to vote.

come off

- to be successful, to happen

The party came off without any problems and everyone was happy.

come on!

- please, hurry, go faster

"Come on, I only have a few minutes before I must go."

"Come on, stop doing that."

come on board

- to begin to work somewhere

The new manager came on board last month.

come on strong

- to overwhelm others with a strong personality

The man came on too strong during the job interview.

come on the scene

- to appear in a certain area or place

When the new DVD player came on the scene everybody wanted one.

come out ahead

- to improve one's situation

Although our new car was expensive, we came out ahead because it is very cheap to operate.

come out for (someone or something)

- to announce one's support for (someone or something)

The mayor recently came out for legal gambling in the city.

come out for (something)

- to appear for something, to attend something

Many people came out for the concert in the park.

come out in the wash

- to work out all right, to turn out well in the end, to become understood eventually

Everything came out in the wash as the students discussed their problems.

come out of left field

- to be completely unexpected, to be a surprise (from the game of baseball)

The manager's new idea came out of left field and we have no idea what it means.

come out of nowhere

- to appear suddenly

The eagle came out of nowhere and captured the small mouse.

come out of one's shell

- to become more friendly or sociable

The little boy came out of his shell and began to talk to everybody around him.

come out of the blue

- to appear suddenly (as if from the sky)

My friend's idea for making money came out of the blue.

come out of the closet

- to reveal one's secret interests, to reveal that one is gay

Nobody was surprised when my cousin came out of the closet.

come out with (something)

- to say something, to make something known

The child has recently come out with many funny expressions.

come over

- to come for a visit

My friend is going to come over for a visit tonight.

come over

- to change sides

The politician supports the opposition but we hope that he will soon come over to our side.

come (someone's) way

- to come to someone

A small blue car came my way while I was standing on the highway.

come through (for someone)

- to do what one is required or expected to do (often under difficult circumstances)

My friend will always come through for me when I need his help.

come through (something)

- to complete a difficult activity successfully, to survive something successfully

Our town came through the big storm with no damage.

come to

- to regain consciousness

The woman came to a few hours after the accident.

come to a bad end

- to end in disaster

The man and his family came to a bad end when they moved to a small town.

come to a dead end

- to be unable to go any further

We kept driving on the dirt road until we came to a dead end.

come to a (grinding) halt

- to stop completely

The traffic on the bridge came to a grinding halt because of the accident.

come to a head

- to come to a point where a problem must be solved

The issue came to a head and everyone was forced to talk about the problem.

come to a pretty pass

- to develop into a bad or difficult situation

Things have come to a pretty pass and nobody knows what to do about the problem.

come to a standstill

- to stop

The circus came to a standstill when the elephant escaped from his cage.

come to accept (something)

- to begin or learn to do or feel something

At first, I disliked the girl but recently I have come to accept her.

come to an end

- to stop, to finish

When the story came to an end the children had fallen asleep.

come to believe (something)

- to begin or learn to believe something

Many people have come to believe that the stadium is too old.

come to blows

- to begin to fight

The two men came to blows when they were trying to fix the car.

come to feel (something)

- to begin or learn to feel something

I have come to feel that the girl is not suited for this job.

come to grief

- to have a bad accident or disappointment

The man has recently come to grief because of his son's problems with the police.

come to grips with (something)

- to struggle successfully with an idea or problem

The woman has finally come to grips with her husband's gambling.

come to know (someone or something)

- to begin to know something

Since I have come to know the girl, I really like her.

come to life

- to become alive or lively

The party came to life when the host and hostess entered the room.

come to light

- to be discovered, to become known

It has come to light that the company recently lost millions of dollars.

come to mind

- to enter into one's consciousness

Nothing came to mind when I tried to remember the names of the actors.

come to naught

- to end in failure

Our efforts to find a new apartment have come to naught.

come to nothing

- to end in failure

All of my efforts to help my friend find a job came to nothing.

come to one's senses

- to begin to think clearly or act sensibly

The man came to his senses and bought a cheap car rather than an expensive one.

come to pass

- to happen, to occur

I do not know what will come to pass but now the company has many financial problems.

come to (something)

- to be equal to something, to total a number, to amount to something

Our weekly food bill comes to much money every week.

come to terms with (someone or something)

- to reach an agreement with someone, to accept something

We came to terms with the bank and were able to buy the house.

come to the fore

- to come into an important place or position, to come to the front

Several members of the class came to the fore and took important positions in the club.

come to the point

- to be direct

The man's speech was interesting but he never really came to the point.

come true

- to become reality, to prove to be correct

The young girl is working hard to make her dreams come true.

come unglued

- to lose emotional control

The woman came unglued when she learned that she had lost her job.

come up

- to happen unexpectedly

I know that I will not be able to go to the party if something comes up.

come up against (someone or something)

- to encounter a difficulty or a problem or someone who may prevent you from achieving your goal

I came up against a very difficult problem while I was working with my computer programmer.

come up in the world

- to improve one's status or situation in life

I knew that I had come up in the world when I was invited to dinner with the president of our company.

come up smelling like roses

- to look good after a difficult or bad time

Everybody in the company looked bad except for our manager who came up smelling like roses.

come up to (someone or something)

- to approach someone or something

The man came up to me and asked me for directions.

come up with (something)

- to produce/find/create a thought or idea or answer

We are trying to come up with a name for the new magazine.

come what may

- no matter what might happen

Come what may, I am determined to go to Spain for my holidays.

come with the territory

- to be expected under the circumstances (like something that comes with a sales territory)

The fact that the man has no free time comes with the territory with his work as a news reporter.

commit (something) to memory

- to memorize something

I worked hard to commit the names to memory.

common touch

- a friendly manner with everyone

My neighbor has a common touch and everybody likes him a lot.

company man

- a person who always works hard and agrees with his employees

My uncle was a company man and was very devoted to his company.

con (someone) out of (something)

- to trick someone to give you money or something valuable

The man on the street corner tried to con the woman out of some money.

confide in (someone)

- to tell secrets or personal information to someone

I usually confide in my friend when I have a problem.

confuse (someone or something) with (someone or something)

- to fail to distinguish between two things or people

I always confuse our new teacher with our previous teacher.

The boy confused one word with another word.

conk out

- to fall asleep quickly and with great fatigue

After we returned from the hike, I immediately conked out in front of the TV.

consider an offer

- to think about an offer or proposal

The man considered the offer to buy his car.

conspicuous by one's absence

- to have one's absence noticed

The teacher was conspicuous by her absence and everybody asked where she was.

contradiction in terms

- a statement that seems to have a contradiction

It was a contradiction in terms for the woman to pretend that she had no money while living in a mansion.

contrary to (someone or something)

- in spite of something

Contrary to what everybody thought, my friend had already quit his job.

control the purse strings

- to be in charge of the money

My mother used to control the purse strings in our family.

cook (someone's) goose

- to destroy someone's chances, to damage or ruin someone

The girl cooked her goose and now has no chance of getting the new job.

cook the books

- to cheat in bookkeeping

The accountant was fired when someone discovered that he was cooking the books.

cook up a storm

- to prepare a large quantity of food

My friend cooked up a storm for the party.

cook up (something) or cook (something) up

- to invent something, to plan or plot something

I do not know what kind of plan the woman is cooking up but it will be interesting.

cool as a cucumber

- to be very calm and brave, to be not worried or anxious

The woman was as cool as a cucumber when her canoe turned over in the river.

cool down

- to let one's anger become less strong

When the basketball player began to cool down he was allowed to play again.

cool off

- to let one's anger become less strong

The teacher sent the children into the corner to cool off.

cool one's heels

- to be kept waiting

The man was forced to cool his heels before his boss would talk to him.

cop a plea

- to plead guilty to a crime in order to get a lesser penalty

The man was forced to cop a plea when the evidence against him became very strong.

cop out

- to avoid doing something that you were planning to do

My friend copped out from our plan to go to the beach for the day.

copy (someone) on (something)

- to send a copy of a letter or memo or email to someone

I plan to copy my supervisor on the letter that I am writing.

a copycat

- someone who copies another person's work or actions

The little boy was accused of being a copycat by the other children.

corner the market

- to dominate a particular market with your product

The large company has cornered the market for cell phones in our city.

cost a pretty penny

- to cost a lot of money

My aunt's new coat cost a pretty penny.

cost an arm and a leg

- to cost much money

The new motorcycle cost my brother an arm and a leg.

cough up (something) or cough (something) up

- to give something unwillingly

The man coughed up enough money to pay for the bicycle.

could do with (someone or something)

- to want or need someone or something

I could do with a new computer because mine is getting old.

count noses

- to count people

After the teacher finished counting noses everybody got on the bus.

count on (someone or something)

- to depend on someone or something

You can count on our boss to do everything right.

count one's chickens before they're hatched

- to assume that something will be successful before it is certain

"Don't count your chickens before they're hatched. You are spending your money before you have a job."

count (someone) in or count in (someone)

- to include someone in something

I know that my friends will count me in if they go to the zoo.

count (someone) out or count out (someone)

- to exclude someone from something

"Please count me out of your plans to go skiing this weekend."

a course of action

- the procedures that will be followed to do something

We decided on a course of action before we told our boss our decision.

cover a lot of ground

- to deal with much information or facts, to travel a great distance

We covered a lot of ground in our history class at school.

cover for (someone)

- to make excuses for someone, to cover someone's errors

I covered for my friend when she was late for work.

cover for (someone)

- to do someone else's work

We always cover for each other when someone at work is sick.

cover one's tracks

- to hide where one has been, to hide what one has done

The man was trying to cover his tracks but it was easy to see where he had been.

cover up (something) or cover (something) up

- to hide something wrong or bad

The politician tried to cover up the facts regarding the illegal campaign funds.

cozy up to (someone)

- to try to be extra friendly to someone

I do not know what my neighbor wants but recently he has been trying to cozy up to me.

crack a book

- to open a book to study

I did not crack a book until the last week of classes.

crack a joke

- to tell a joke

The man was much fun at the party because he was always cracking jokes.

crack a smile

- to let a smile show on one's face

Our boss never cracked a smile during the meeting.

crack down on (someone or something)

- to enforce laws or rules strictly

The school principal decided to crack down on people running in the halls.

crack of dawn

- daybreak, early in the morning

We got up at the crack of dawn to go fishing.

crack open a book

- to open a book to study

I did not crack open a book during the weekend.

crack the whip

- to try to make someone work hard or obey you by threatening him or her

Our boss had to crack the whip in order to get the job finished before the weekend.

crack up

- to burst into laughter

I cracked up when the man started talking about the incident with the taxi driver.

crackpot

- an eccentric person with ideas that do not make sense to others, a crazy person

The man is a crackpot and you never know what he will do next.

cramp one's style

- to limit one's talk or action

Working in the new department is beginning to cramp my style.

crank out (something) or crank (something) out

- to produce or make something

I was able to crank out two very good papers before the end of the year.

crash and burn

- to fail spectacularly

We did not want to crash and burn so we were careful about how we proceeded with the project.

crash the gate

- to enter someplace without a ticket or without paying

Many people did not have a ticket for the concert so they tried to crash the gate.

crazy about (someone or something)

- to like someone or something very much

My sister is crazy about rap music.

cream of the crop

- the best of a group, the top choice

When our company hires new employees we look for the cream of the crop.

create a stink

- to make a big issue out of something

The woman tried to create a stink when she found the bad product at the supermarket.

create an uproar

- to cause a sensation or outburst

The referees created an uproar when they asked the star player to leave the game.

creature comforts

- things that make people comfortable

We had no creature comforts during our trip to South America.

a credit to (someone or something)

- to be invaluable or beneficial to someone or something

The doctor was a credit to the hospital where he worked.

the creeps

- a strong feeling of fear or disgust

I get the creeps every time that I see a snake.

creep up on (someone or something)

- to crawl quietly toward someone or something

The thief crept up on the woman in the supermarket.

crocodile tears

- a show of sorrow that is not real

The man said that he was very sorry but his tears were only crocodile tears.

crop up

- to appear or happen unexpectedly

I will meet my friend early next week unless something crops up that keeps me busy.

cross a bridge before one comes to it

- to think and worry about future events or problems before they happen

We should not worry about that problem now. We do not need to cross that bridge before we come to it.

cross a bridge when one comes to it

- to deal with a situation when and not before it happens

I am not going to worry about losing my job now. I will cross that bridge when I come to it.

cross one's heart and hope to die

- to promise that what you are saying is true

"I promise that I will give you the money next week. Cross my heart and hope to die."

cross one's mind

- to think of something, to occur to someone

It crossed my mind that I will see my friend in the evening so I do not need to phone him.

cross out (something) or cross (something) out

- to eliminate something by drawing a line through it

I crossed out my name from the list of volunteers.

cross swords with (someone)

- to have an argument with someone

I do not want to cross swords with my supervisor again.

cross the Rubicon

- to do something where you cannot go back (Julius Caesar crossed the Rubicon and made a fight with the Roman Senate inevitable)

The man crossed the Rubicon when he began on a course that he could not turn back from.

cross to bear/carry

- something that you must do or continue with even though you are suffering

Looking after my sister's children is my cross to bear.

crunch numbers

- to do mathematical calculations

Our boss is in his office crunching numbers for our company.

crux of the matter

- the central issue of a matter

The crux of the matter is that we do not have enough money to go on a holiday.

cry bloody murder

- to scream like something very serious has happened

The woman cried bloody murder when the man tried to steal her purse.

cry out for (someone or something)

- to need someone or something badly, to lack something

The new room that we built cries out for new furniture.

The baby cried out for her mother.

cry over spilt milk

- to cry or complain about something that has already happened

"Don't cry over spilt milk. You can never change the past."

cry uncle

- to admit defeat, to admit that you have lost

The wrestler had to cry uncle when the other wrestler pinned him to the mat.

cry wolf

- to warn of danger that is not there

The man is always crying wolf and now nobody believes him.

crying need for (someone or something)

- a desperate need for someone or something

There is a crying need for nurses in the local hospital.

a crying shame

- a very unfortunate situation

It was a crying shame that our class trip to Europe was cancelled.

cue (someone) in or cue in (someone)

- to tell someone what is going on

I did not know what was happening until somebody cued me in.

(not one's) cup of tea

- (not) something that one enjoys

Modern art is not my cup of tea so I will stay home and not go to the art gallery.

curiosity killed the cat

- being too nosy or curious may get a person into trouble

"You should not worry about what your friend is doing. Remember, curiosity killed the cat."

curl up and die

- to retreat and die

I wanted to curl up and die when I saw my old boyfriend at the party.

curry favor with (someone)

- to flatter someone to get his or her help or friendship

Our boss has been working hard to curry favor with the other members of the committee.

cut Idioms**cut a deal**

- to make a business arrangement or deal with someone

The company was able to cut a deal with their employees.

cut a fine figure

- to look good, to dress well

The man cut a fine figure when he entered the dining room.

cut a wide swath

- to attract a lot of attention

The man cuts a wide swath when he enters a room.

a cut above (someone or something)

- a little better than someone or something

The new principal is a cut above the previous one.

cut across

- to cross or go through something instead of going around it

We decided to cut across the field because we were in a hurry to get to school.

cut-and-dried

- to be previously decided, to be prearranged

The decision was cut-and-dried and nobody asked for our opinion.

cut-and-dried

- obvious, routine, straightforward

The instructions for the machine were cut-and-dried and very easy to understand.

cut and run

- to leave as quickly as possible

We cut and run as soon as we finished delivering the goods.

cut back on (something)

- to use fewer or use less of something

We were forced to cut back on the number of people who were invited to the party.

cut both ways

- to serve both sides of an argument

What the man said cuts both ways and we should think carefully about it.

cut class

- to not go to class

I cut class last week and went to a movie.

cut corners

- to economize, to not spend money

We will have to cut corners in order to save money for our holiday.

cut down on (something)

- to use less of something

Recently, the man has cut down on his smoking in order to become more healthy.

cut from the same cloth

- to share a lot of similarities

The two boys are cut from the same cloth and are similar in every way.

cut no ice with (someone)

- to have no influence on someone

The girl's excuses cut no ice with her teacher or the principal.

cut off one's nose to spite one's face

- to make things worse for oneself because you are angry at someone else

The man is cutting off his nose to spite his face. Taking revenge on his neighbor will only cause him more problems.

cut off (something) or cut (something) off

- to shorten something by cutting the ends

The string was too long so I cut off the end.

cut one's eyeteeth on (something)

- to have done something since one was very young

The man cut his eyeteeth on fixing bicycles and he is now an expert.

cut one's losses

- to reduce one's losses

We decided to cut our losses and sell our business before it lost more money.

cut out for (something)

- to have a talent for something, to be suited for something

I do not think that I am cut out for the travelling that is required for my job.

cut out (something) or cut (something) out

- to eliminate something

My cousin decided to cut out chocolate in order to lose weight.

cut out (something) or cut (something) out

- to remove something by cutting

I cut out the story from the newspaper.

cut out the deadwood

- to remove unproductive people from a job

The company decided to cut out the deadwood and began to fire many people.

cut out to be (something)

- to have the ability or interest or qualifications to be something

The man is not cut out to be a salesman.

cut short (something) or cut (something) short

- to make something shorter, to interrupt something

The man had to cut short his speech.

We decided to cut short our holidays and come home early.

cut (someone) a check

- to write a check to someone, to have a computer print a check (usually used for checks from a business)

We cut the man a check for the work that he had done.

cut (someone) down to size

- to prove that someone is not as good as he or she thinks

I cut my colleague down to size when I criticized what he said at the meeting.

cut (someone) in or cut in (someone)

- to give someone a share of something

I cut my friend in on the profits from selling the computers.

cut (someone) off or cut off (someone)

- to stop someone from saying something, to disconnect someone on the phone

I tried to tell my father about the accident but he cut me off before I could speak.

cut (someone) to the quick

- to hurt someone's feelings very badly

The woman cut her friend to the quick when she criticized her new clothes.

cut the mustard

- to reach the required standard for something

The man does not cut the mustard and he will not be able to work here.

cut to the chase

- to get to the important matter of something

The lawyer cut to the chase and was able to get the information quickly.

D

daily grind

- the everyday work routine

My father is tired of the daily grind and will retire soon.

dance to a different tune

- to change one's behavior or attitude

Our boss began dancing to a different tune when the head salesman decided to quit.

dance with death

- to do something that is very risky

The teenagers were dancing with death when they began to race their cars.

dare (someone) to do (something)

- to challenge someone to do something

The little boy dared his friend to throw a rock at the window.

dark horse

- a political candidate who is little known to the general public

The woman candidate was a dark horse but she won the election easily.

darken (someone's) door

- to visit someone or somewhere

The man has never darkened the door of the library in his town.

dash off

- to leave quickly

We dashed off as soon as the concert ended.

dash off (something) or dash (something) off

- to write or finish something quickly

I plan to dash off a letter before I go to work.

date back to (a previous time)

- to go back to a previous time

The old building dates back to 1850.

Davy Jone's locker

- the bottom of the sea (as a grave)

When the boat sank, all of the crew members went to Davy Jone's locker.

dawn on (someone)

- to become clear or occur to someone

It finally dawned on me why my friend was angry.

day after day

- everyday

Day after day, the woman goes to the school to meet her child.

day and night

- all of the time

We worked day and night to finish the project before the end of the month.

day in and day out

- regularly, all of the time

My father goes to a small restaurant for lunch day in and day out and he never gets tired of it.

day-to-day

- daily, everyday

The president was not involved in the day-to-day running of the university.

daylight robbery

- the extreme overcharging of money for something

The amount of money which the gas station charged for the gasoline was daylight robbery.

days running

- several days in a row

There were concerts at the auditorium for six days running.

dead Idioms

dead ahead

- to be directly ahead

There was a truck dead ahead so we put on the car brakes.

dead as a doornail

- to be very dead

The man was as dead as a doornail after the car accident.

dead center

- the exact middle

I easily hit the target dead center.

dead duck

- a person or a thing in a hopeless situation

The man is a dead duck and has no hope of regaining his former position.

dead end

- the end of a road, an impasse

The negotiations between the players and the owners have reached a dead end.

dead in one's tracks

- to be stopped exactly where someone or something is at the moment

The police stopped the robber dead in his tracks.

dead letter

- a piece of mail that cannot be delivered or returned to the sender

The letter with no return address went back to the post office as a dead letter.

dead loss

- a total loss

The money that I gave to my friend is a dead loss and none of it will be returned.

dead on one's feet

- to be exhausted

I was dead on my feet after working all day in my garden.

dead set against (something)

- to be determined not to do something

The parents are dead set against their son going to Europe for a year.

dead tired

- to be very tired, to be exhausted

I was dead tired so I went to bed when I got home.

dead to the world

- to be sleeping soundly

The little boy was dead to the world when his father looked into the bedroom.

dead wrong

- to be totally wrong

I was dead wrong in my calculations to build the table.

deadbeat

- a person who never pays his debts

There is a new government policy to penalize deadbeat fathers.

deadpan

- an expressionless or emotionless face

My friend had a deadpan expression when he told us the story.

deaf and dumb

- to be unable to hear or speak

The man was deaf and dumb and could not communicate with the woman on the train.

deal in (something)

- to buy and sell something

The man has been dealing in antiques for many years.

deal with (someone)

- to act in a specific way toward someone, to do business with someone

The company is planning to deal with the late employee soon.

deal with (something)

- to be concerned with something, to take action about something

We will deal with the boxes tomorrow.

decide in favor of (someone or something)

- to determine the winner of something, to decide who is right

The city decided in favor of building a new bridge over the river.

decked out

- to be dressed in fancy clothes

My sister was decked out in her best clothes for the party.

deem it to be necessary

- to believe that something is necessary

The judge deemed it to be necessary to postpone the trial for a week.

deep-six (something)

- to throw away something, to dispose of something

I decided to deep-six my videos as I did not want them any longer.

deep water

- serious trouble or difficulty

The boy will be in deep water if he does not tell us where he spent the money.

deliver the goods

- to do a good or successful job of something

He is the best manager that we have. He knows how to deliver the goods.

desert a sinking ship

- to leave a situation or place when things become difficult or unpleasant

Many employees decided to desert a sinking ship when their company began to have problems.

devil of a job

- a very difficult job

Everybody thought that unloading the truck was a devil of a job.

devil-may-care attitude

- an unworried attitude, an attitude where one does not care what happens

The man has a devil-may-care attitude to his job and nothing bothers him.

devote (something) to (something)

- to make much effort for something, to dedicate oneself to something

The man devoted much energy to the new project.

diamond in the rough

- a good person or thing that is hidden by a rough exterior

The man is a diamond in the rough and a very gentle person.

die a natural death

- to die by disease or of old age and not by an accident or by violence

My grandfather was very old and he died a natural death.

die away

- to gradually get lower and then disappear (often said about noise)

The noise of the airplane slowly died away.

die down

- to come slowly to an end, to grow weaker

When the sound of the music died down we were able to go to sleep.

die in one's boots

- to die fighting

The soldiers died in their boots after fighting very hard.

the die is cast

- something has been decided and you cannot change the decision

The die is cast and now that we have sold our house we must move.

die laughing

- to laugh very loud and hard

We almost died laughing when we saw the movie.

die off

- to die one after another until the number is small

The house plants began to die off soon after we moved to a new apartment.

die out

- to die or disappear slowly until gone, to not exist anymore

The campfire slowly died out and we went to bed.

Dinosaurs died out many years ago.

dig in

- to begin eating

"Let's dig in and eat before the food gets cold!"

dig in one's heels or dig one's heels in

- to refuse to change one's course of action or opinion

Our boss dug in his heels and refused to give us time off.

dig one's own grave

- to be responsible for one's own problems

The woman dug her own grave when she fought with her boss. Now she is having many problems at work.

dig some dirt up on (someone) or dig up some dirt on (someone)

- to find out something bad about someone

The newspaper worked hard to dig up some dirt on the politician.

dig (someone or something) up or dig up (someone or something)

- to make an effort to find someone or something

I had to dig up some blankets for my friend when he stayed at our house.

dig (something) out or dig out (something)

- to locate something

I dug out last year's income tax forms to look at.

a dime a dozen

- common, easy to get and of little value

Used books are a dime a dozen and it is difficult to sell them.

dip into (something)

- to borrow from a supply of something

We had to dip into our savings to get enough money for a holiday.

dirt cheap

- to be extremely cheap

The denim jackets were dirt cheap so I decided to buy one.

a dirty look

- a look that shows dislike or disapproval

The boy's mother gave the boy a dirty look when he entered the kitchen.

dirty work

- unpleasant or uninteresting work

I refused to do the dirty work for my friend.

dish out (criticism)

- to criticize someone roughly, to treat someone roughly

Our supervisor likes to dish out criticism to others but he does not like to hear criticism about himself.

dish out (food)

- to serve food from a large bowl or plate

I began to dish out the food when the guests arrived.

dispose of (something)

- to discard something, to destroy something, to get rid of something

We must dispose of our old sofa before we buy a new one.

dive in headfirst

- to do something impulsively without thinking about the consequences

The man likes to dive in headfirst with anything that he does.

dive right into (something)

- to begin to do something without hesitating (some swimmers like to dive right in without checking the temperature of the water)

Many of the students decided to dive right into their studies when university started.

divide and conquer

- to split an opposing side into two groups so that you can win against them

The government was trying to divide and conquer the opposition parties.

divide (something) fifty-fifty

- to divide something into two equal parts

We divided the money that we won fifty-fifty.

do Idioms

do a double take

- to look again in surprise at someone or something

The girl did a double take when she saw her old boyfriend with another girl.

do a job on (someone or something)

- to harm or damage someone or something

We really did a job on the bookcase that we were trying to move.

do a land-office business

- to do much business in a short time

The children are doing a land-office business by selling the cold drinks next to the stadium.

do a number on (someone or something)

- to hurt or damage someone or something

The students did a number on the spectator stands during the soccer game.

do a snow job on (someone)

- to deceive or confuse someone

The salesman tried to do a snow job on me but I did not believe him.

do an about-face

- to suddenly reverse one's opinion

We did an about-face on our decision to permit drinking coffee in the library.

do away with (something)

- to stop something, to get rid of something

The company will do away with their policy of working one weekend a month.

do credit to (someone)

- to add to someone's reputation

The woman's graduation thesis did credit to her hard work and patience.

do in (someone) or do (someone) in

- to make someone tired, to exhaust someone

I was done in after I finished the marathon.

do in (something) or do (something) in

- to ruin or destroy something

The boy quickly did in the new shoes that he had received for his birthday.

do justice to (something)

- to do something well, to represent something accurately

The painting of my grandfather does not do justice to his extremely good looks.

do lunch

- to meet someone for lunch

I plan to do lunch with my friend tomorrow.

do one's best

- to try to do something as well as one can

I tried to do my best on the exam.

do one's bit

- to make one's expected contribution to a group project

Our teacher did his bit to help plan for the party.

do one's duty

- to do one's job or what is expected of one

The guard was doing his duty when he began to ask the customer questions.

do one's part

- to make one's expected contribution to a group project

Everybody had to do their part to make the meeting a success.

do one's thing

- to do what one wants to do and enjoys doing

My friend enjoys doing his thing when and where he chooses.

do or die

- to make a great effort

It was do or die for the man when he started his new job.

do over (something) or do (something) over

- to repeat something, to do something again

The teacher made me do my homework over.

do (someone) good

- to be good or beneficial for someone

It will do my friend good to go on a holiday.

do (someone) out of (something)

- to cheat someone out of something

The man was worried that the company would do him out of the bonus that he was expecting.

do (someone's) bidding

- to do what someone else wants

The principal was able to get the head teacher to do his bidding with the other teachers.

do something rash

- to take drastic action (usually without thinking)

My friend is extremely angry and she may do something rash.

do (something) by the book

- to follow the rules of something exactly

Our boss likes to do everything by the book.

do (something) like it is going out of fashion/style

- to use/buy/eat much or too much of something

My friend is spending money like it is going out of fashion.

do the dishes

- to wash and dry some dishes

We did the dishes soon after eating dinner.

do the honors

- to perform the duty of a host (when serving a drink etc.)

"Would you like to do the honors and pour everybody a drink?"

do the trick

- to work well, to achieve a good or desired result

I think that the new piece of equipment should do the trick and solve our problem.

do time

- to spend time in prison

The man was doing time when we first heard about him.

do with (someone or something)

- to be acquainted or involved or associated with someone or something

"I do not know what that incident was to do with."

(can/could) do with (something)

- to benefit from (something)

I have been working hard all day so now I could do with a cold drink.

do without (something)

- to manage without something

We will have to do without sugar because there is none left.

do wonders

- to produce excellent results

Doing some exercise will do wonders for your health.

dog and pony show

- a display or demonstration used to gain approval for something

The politician put on a dog and pony show to make people forget about the scandal.

dog-eat-dog

- to be ready or willing to fight and hurt others to get what you want

It is a dog-eat-dog world in the advertising and public relations business.

dog in the manger

- one who prevents others from enjoying what one has no use for oneself (from Aesop's Fables)

The girl was a dog in the manger. She cancelled the dinner because she could not attend.

doll (oneself) up or doll up (oneself)

- to dress in fancy clothes

The woman was all dolled up for the party at the downtown hotel.

dollar for dollar

- considering the cost

Dollar for dollar, going to the resort for a holiday is a good deal.

don sackcloth and ashes

- to behave in a way that shows that you are very sorry for something that you have done wrong - in ancient Biblical times people wore very uncomfortable sackcloth (cloth for sacks) for mourning and also to repent for something that they did wrong

The man was asked to don sackcloth and ashes to repent for his terrible mistake.

done for

- to be ruined or defeated or dying

I think that our team is done for this season.

done in

- to be tired, to be exhausted

I was done in so I went to bed early.

done to a T

- to be cooked just right

The steaks were done to a T and everybody was very happy with them.

done to a turn

- to be cooked just right

Everything was done to a turn at the party.

done with (something)

- to be finished using something

I was done with the computer so I let my sister use it.

doomed to failure

- to be certain to fail

The policy of the school was doomed to failure because nobody would support it.

a dose of one's own medicine

- the same kind of treatment that one gives to other people

The man got a dose of his own medicine when his boss began to treat him the same way that he treated others.

double back

- to turn back from where you are going or where you have been

We decided to double back from the arena and return home.

double-check (something)

- to check something again to be sure that it is correct

I double-checked the price of the airplane ticket.

double-cross (someone)

- to deceive someone, to promise one thing and then do another

The man tried to double-cross his partner.

double-header

- two games (usually baseball) that are played one after the other and are played in front of the same crowd

We were tired after watching a double-header last night.

double-talk

- talk or words that appear to mean something but do not

The speaker gave the audience much double-talk and nobody knew what he wanted to say.

double time

- two times one's regular wages for working beyond one's normal hours

The man worked on the national holiday and received double time for his work.

double up

- to share a room with someone

Everybody had to double up when they went to the convention.

a doubting Thomas

- someone who needs strong proof to believe something

My friend is a doubting Thomas and you must tell him many times before he will believe something.

down Idioms

down and dirty

- unfair or nasty or sneaky

The team decided to get down and dirty in order to try and win the tournament.

down and out

- to have no money

My friend has been down and out before but usually he can find a job.

down-at-the-heels

- to be shabby, to be poorly dressed

The man looked down-at-the-heels after he was fired from his job.

down for the count

- to be finished for now

The boxer was down for the count but everybody expected him to stand up and fight again.

down in the dumps

- to be unhappy

The girl has been down in the dumps since her boyfriend moved away.

down on one's luck

- to be unlucky, to have no money

The man was down on his luck and did not have a place to live.

down on (someone)

- to be critical of someone, to be angry at someone

The girl is down on her friend but I do not know the reason.

down one's alley

- to be suited to one's tastes and abilities

Computers are down my alley so I am sure that I will be interested in the job.

down the drain

- to be wasted or lost

My uncle is throwing money down the drain when he goes to the horse races.

down the hatch

- to swallow a drink or eat something

In the movie the captain said down the hatch whenever he gave the sailors a drink.

down the line

- straight ahead, in the future

There will be many changes in our company down the line.

down the tubes

- to be ruined or wasted

Our plans went down the tubes after my friend refused to join us.

down to earth

- to be sensible and practical

My mother is very down to earth.

down to the last detail

- considering all of the details

We fixed up everything on the boat, down to the last detail.

down to the wire

- at the very last moment, very close to the time when something is due (from the wire at the end of a horse race)

The election went down to the wire but the candidate was re-elected to another term in office.

We went down to the wire but we were able to finish the project on time.

down with (an illness)

- to be ill, to be sick at home

My sister was down with a cold so she could not go out for a few days.

drag in (someone or something) or drag (someone or something) in

- to insist on bringing someone or something into a discussion

The employee always drags in his personal problems when we talk about his job performance.

drag on

- to pass very slowly, to make something longer

The speech was dragging on so we decided to leave early.

a drag on (someone)

- a burden to someone

The problems at work were a drag on my friend and he became sick because of them.

drag one's feet/heels

- to act slowly or reluctantly

The man is dragging his heels about whether or not to take the job.

draw Idioms**draw a blank**

- to get no response to something, to get a negative result

The manager drew a blank when he went to the head office to get information about the merger.

draw a line between two things

- to separate two things

We must draw a line between using the Internet for work and using it for personal use.

draw blood

- to make a wound that bleeds, to anger someone

The politician was very careful not to draw blood during the debate.

draw fire

- to receive criticism for something

The government began to draw fire when they announced changes to the health care system.

draw fire

- to be a target, to attract or provoke shooting

The soldiers drew fire when they entered the small village.

draw in one's horns

- to spend less money

The company is not doing well so everybody must draw in their horns.

draw interest

- to appear interesting and attract someone's attention

The singers drew much interest when they performed at the festival.

draw interest

- to earn interest when money is deposited in a bank

The money that we put in the bank draws interest every month.

draw lots/straws

- to choose from a group of straws or things to decide who will do something

We decided to draw lots to see who would wash the dishes.

draw (someone) out or draw out (someone)

- to make a person talk or tell something

The girl was very quiet but we were able to draw her out and she began talking.

draw (something) from (something)

- to obtain something from something, to get something from something

The man draws much pleasure from his hobby of painting.

draw the line (at something)

- to set a limit for something, to refuse to consider something

We have to draw the line somewhere to limit the costs of the party.

draw to a close

- to end

The tournament was drawing to a close and everybody was going back home.

draw up (something) or draw (something) up

- to put something in writing, to prepare documents or legal papers

They were able to draw up the contract while we were waiting.

dredge up (something) or dredge (something) up

- to uncover something unpleasant and remind people about it

The newspaper is always trying to dredge up bad things about the government.

dress (someone) down or dress down (someone)

- to scold someone

The supervisor took the clerk into her office to dress her down.

dress up

- to put on one's best clothes

I decided to dress up for dinner at the restaurant.

dressed to kill

- to wear one's finest clothes

The woman was dressed to kill when I saw her at the concert last week.

dressed to the nines/teeth

- to be dressed elegantly

The movie stars were dressed to the nines during the awards ceremony.

drive a hard bargain

- to conclude a bargain without making any concessions

Although the man drives a hard bargain, I like doing business with him.

drive at (something)

- to intend or mean to say something

I do not know what the man was driving at in his speech.

drive (someone) up a wall

- to irritate or annoy someone greatly

My neighbor's constant complaining is driving me up a wall.

drive (something) home or drive home (something)

- to make something clearly understood

The high price of gasoline drove home the necessity of driving less.

drive up (a price)

- to make the price of something increase

The cold weather is driving up the price of heating oil.

drive up to (someone or something)

- to approach someone or something

The car drove up to the bank.

driving force behind (someone or something)

- the motivating force behind someone or something

The potato farmers were the driving force behind the efforts to get people to eat more potatoes.

drop Idioms

drop a bombshell

- to announce some shocking news

The government dropped a bombshell when they announced that they were going to close the hospital.

drop a hint

- to casually make a hint or suggestion about something

The clerk dropped a hint that he wanted to transfer to a new department.

drop around

- to come for a visit

My friend plans to drop around for a visit tomorrow.

drop back

- to move or step backwards, to retreat

During the hike my foot began to get sore so I decided to drop back and rest for awhile.

drop by

- to visit someone

My uncle dropped by after work for a visit.

drop by the wayside

- to give up or fail before the finish of something

Many runners dropped by the wayside during the marathon.

drop dead

- to die suddenly

The bus driver dropped dead while driving the bus.

Drop dead!

- Go away!, to stop bothering someone

I told my brother to drop dead when he came into my room and now he is angry at me.

drop everything

- to stop doing what you are doing

When the fire alarm rang we dropped everything and went outside.

drop in (on someone)

- to make a short or unplanned visit to someone

I want to drop in on my friend after I finish work.

drop in one's tracks

- to collapse from exhaustion

The runner dropped in his tracks during the race.

drop in the bucket

- a small amount

The money that my friend repaid me was a drop in the bucket compared to what he owes me.

drop names

- to mention the names of famous people as if they were your friends

Nobody likes the girl because she is always dropping names when she meets her friends.

drop off (to sleep)

- to fall asleep

I dropped off to sleep while I was watching television.

drop off (someone or something) or drop (someone or something) off

- to take someone or something to a certain location

I dropped off my friend at the airport.

I dropped off the book at my friend's house.

drop out of (something)

- to quit school or a course of some kind

The boy dropped out of the class after three months.

drop (someone) a line

- to write or mail a note or letter to someone

My friend promised that she will drop me a line when she gets to Singapore.

drop the ball

- to make an error or mistake, to handle things badly

The government dropped the ball with its decision to expand the airport runway without consulting the local residents.

drop the price (of something)

- to lower the price of something

The computer company will drop the price of computers next month.

drop the subject

- to stop talking about something

My friend was getting angry while we were talking about money so I decided to drop the subject.

drown one's sorrows

- to drink alcohol or do something to forget one's problems

The man is drowning his sorrows with a drink.

drown (someone) out or drown out (someone)

- to make so much noise that it is impossible to hear someone

The cheering fans drowned out the team captain.

drowning in (something)

- to be submerged in something, to be overwhelmed with something

The man is drowning in debt and has no money.

I am drowning in work this week.

drum up (something) or drum (something) up

- to encourage something by making an effort

The company was able to drum up a lot of business during the summer.

drum (something) into (someone's) head

- to make someone learn something by force

The teacher worked hard to drum the formulas into the heads of the students.

dry out

- to lose moisture gradually

The beach towel dried out quickly.

dry run

- a rehearsal for something, a practice session

The marriage ceremony was on Saturday so we had a dry run on Thursday night.

dry up

- to become dry, to be depleted

The river began to dry up early in the summer.

The money for the project has dried up.

duck soup

- easy, effortless

a) "How was the test last week?"

b) "It was duck soup - no problem at all."

dumb bunny

- a stupid gullible person

He is a dumb bunny and you never know what he will do next.

dump (something) on (someone)

- to give a large or excessive amount of something to someone

Our teacher dumped much homework on us yesterday.

Dutch auction

- an auction where you start off with a high price and then reduce it

They always sell the flowers at a Dutch auction at the downtown market.

Dutch courage

- unusual or artificial courage (often because of alcohol)

The man was full of Dutch courage when he began to criticize his boss.

Dutch treat

- a meal or movie etc. where each person pays his or her own way, to contribute equally to something

When the boy goes out with his girlfriend it is always a Dutch treat as he does not have much money.

Dutch uncle

- someone who gives you advice like a parent or relative would

My friend is like a Dutch uncle and he is always giving me advice about how I should act.

duty bound (to do something)

- to be forced by duty or honor to do something

I was duty bound to talk to my friend about the money that I had lost.

dwell on (something)

- to think or talk about something all the time

I wish that my friend would not dwell on his personal problems.

dyed-in-the-wool

- permanent, stubborn

The man is a dyed-in-the-wool conservative and will never change.

dying to (do something or go somewhere)

- to be very anxious to do something or go somewhere
I am dying to go and visit my friend in the country.

E

each and every

- every

"I want each and every student to bring his or her textbook tomorrow."

eager beaver

- a person who is always eager to work hard or do extra work

My colleague is an eager beaver and is always ready to work hard when we need him.

eagle eye

- an eye with sharp visual powers

The woman watched her young child with an eagle eye.

an ear to the ground

- attention that is paid to the way things are going or the way people feel and think about something

The president has an ear to the ground and knows everything that is going on in our company.

earful

- a scolding, much talking in the form of complaints

The man gave his daughter an earful when she came home late.

early bird

- a person who gets up early or arrives early for something

My sister is an early bird and gets up very early every morning.

early bird catches/gets the worm

- a person who gets up early in the morning has the best chance of success

Our supervisor always goes to work before his colleagues because he knows that the early bird catches the worm.

early on

- at an early stage

We had a meeting early on to try and solve the problem.

earn one's keep

- to earn one's pay or a place to live by doing some work

I work hard in my uncle's garden in order to earn my keep when I stay with him.

ease off on (someone or something)

- to put less pressure on someone or something, to relax

The president was asked to ease off on his efforts to cut staff in the company.

ease up on (someone or something)

- to put less pressure on someone or something, to relax

The boy was having problems at school so the teacher eased up on him.

easier said than done

- to be easier to talk about than to do

I would like to change jobs but it is easier said than done.

easy come, easy go

- something that you get easily can be lost easily

My cousin does not care if he loses his job or not. For him, everything is easy come, easy go.

easy does it

- doing something slowly or without sudden movements

"Easy does it," I said as we moved the large piano.

easy-going

- to be tolerant and relaxed

Our boss has a very easy-going management style.

easy to come by

- easy to find

Money is not easy to come by for many people with no education.

eat Idioms

eat and run

- to eat a meal quickly and then leave

We had to eat and run in order to arrive at the soccer field early.

eat away at (someone)

- to bother someone, to worry someone

Money problems have been eating away at the man recently.

eat away at (something)

- to rot or destroy something

The mildew has been eating away at the window frame all year.

eat crow

- to admit that one is mistaken or defeated or wrong

Our boss was forced to eat crow when the figures that he presented at the meeting were wrong.

eat dirt

- to accept another's insults or bad treatment

The accountant had to eat dirt because of the problems that he had caused.

eat humble pie

- to admit one's error and apologize

The boy had to eat humble pie when his friends discovered his mistake.

eat in

- to eat at home, to eat in a restaurant where you have a choice to either eat in the restaurant or take the food out

We usually like to eat in on the weekends.

We went to the fast food restaurant and we decided to eat in rather than take the food out.

eat like a bird

- to eat very little

The boy eats like a bird. That is why he cannot gain enough weight to join the football team.

eat like a horse

- to eat a lot

My friend eats like a horse but he never gains any weight.

eat on the run

- to eat while going somewhere in a hurry

We often have to eat on the run during the day.

eat one's cake and have it too

- to use or spend something but still keep it

The man wants to eat his cake and have it too and he will never give up anything.

eat one's hat

- to do something extraordinary or special if something that you do not think will happen actually happens (this is always used with if and is used when you are quite certain that something will happen and if it does not happen then you will do something extraordinary or special - like eating your hat)

I do not think that my friend will arrive here on time. If my friend does arrive here on time I will eat my hat.

I do not think that our team will win the game today. If our team does win the game today I will eat my hat.

eat one's heart out

- to be envious, to be very sad

"You can eat your heart out - I am going to Hawaii for three weeks!"

eat one's words

- to admit being wrong in something that one has said

The worker was forced to eat his words after his boss proved that he was wrong.

eat out

- to eat in a restaurant

I eat out three or four times a week.

eat out of (someone's) hand

- to do what someone else wants

The secretary had her boss eating out of her hand and she could do whatever she wanted.

eat (someone) out of house and home

- to eat much food in someone's home

The two teenage boys were eating their parents out of house and home.

eat up (something) or eat (something) up

- to enjoy or absorb or appreciate something

The students were eating up the comments by their professor.

eat up (something) or eat (something) up

- to eat everything on your plate

I ate up all my dinner and began my homework.

eating (someone)

- to be bothering or worrying someone

I do not know what is eating my friend but she is not in a good mood today.

ebb and flow

- the decrease and increase of something like the tide

The ebb and flow of the singer's popularity was always a topic of conversation.

edge out (someone) or edge (someone) out

- to win a competition against someone and get a job or position

I was able to edge out the other applicants to get the job.

egg (someone) on or egg on (someone)

- to urge or push someone to do something

The boy is always egging his friend on to do stupid things.

either feast or famine

- to be or have either too much or not enough of something

It is either feast or famine for the woman. Sometimes she has lots of money and sometimes she has none.

eke out (a living)

- to earn one's living with difficulty

My uncle was unable to eke out a living on his farm so he sold it.

elbow grease

- the effort and strength to clean something

We will have to use much elbow grease to clean the kitchen.

elbow room

- enough space to be comfortable

The couple moved to the country in order to have more elbow room.

elbow (someone) out of (somewhere)

- to pressure someone out of somewhere

The woman elbowed the other shoppers out of the way so that she could buy some shoes.

eleventh-hour decision

- a decision that is made at the last possible minute

The government made an eleventh-hour decision to save the hospital.

emperor's new clothes

- used when many people believe something that is not true, a situation in which people are afraid to criticize something because everyone else seems to think that it is good or important

It was like the emperor's new clothes when nobody would criticize the popular politician although he was doing many bad things.

an end in itself

- something that one wants specifically for itself and not as a way to do or get something else

For many people travelling is an end in itself and the destination is not important.

end of one's rope

- the last of one's ability or ideas about how to do something

I am at the end of my rope regarding what to do about my job.

end product

- the final result

The end product of the survey was a better understanding of how things are working in our company.

end up (doing something)

- to do something that one had not planned to do, to finally be or do something

I ended up studying rather than going to a movie last night.

The man ended up getting married to his neighbor.

end up (going somewhere)

- to go somewhere where you had not planned to go

We ended up going to a restaurant after the movie last night.

end up (somewhere)

- to finish at a certain place

We ended up at a small coffee shop near the restaurant.

end up with (something)

- to get something as a result of something

I ended up with a cold last weekend after being outside in the rain.

engage in (something)

- to be busy with something, to be occupied with something

The man is engaged in a new project.

The woman was engaged in a long conversation.

engage in small talk

- to talk about minor things rather than more important things

The sales staff engaged in some small talk before the meeting.

enough to go around

- to be enough of something to serve everybody

There was enough cake to go around so everybody had a piece.

enter one's mind

- to come into one's consciousness (an idea)

It never entered my mind to make a reservation at the restaurant.

equal to (something)

- to be able to deal with something

The apartment manager was equal to the task of managing the building.

escape (someone's) notice

- to go unnoticed

The fact that my library books were overdue escaped my notice.

even so

- nevertheless, however

My friend has always worked but even so he has no money saved.

even Steven

- even with (someone or something)

Both teams were even Steven by the middle of the game.

every Idioms**every cloud has a silver lining**

- there is something good in every bad thing

Every cloud has a silver lining and although I lost my job other good things have happened.

every dog has his day

- everybody will have a chance for success someday

You should be patient and wait until you get a chance. Remember every dog has his day.

every inch a (something)

- completely, in every way

Jack was every inch a sailor and loved to go out on the ocean with his boat.

every last one

- every single one

Every last one of the children received a certificate from the swimming club.

every living soul

- everybody

We gave a free newspaper to every living soul in the apartment building.

every minute counts

- time is very important

Every minute counts when the fire department goes to fight a fire.

every nook and cranny

- every small hiding place where you can put something

I looked in every nook and cranny of my apartment but I could not find my house keys.

every other

- every second one

I have to work every other Saturday evening.

every so often

- occasionally

You should stand up every so often when you are on a long plane trip.

every time one turns around

- frequently

Every time I turn around my little boy asks me a question.

every Tom, Dick and Harry

- the average person

The man said that he is not the same as every Tom, Dick and Harry.

every which way

- in all directions

The small children at the birthday party were running every which way.

everything but the kitchen sink

- almost everything

We took everything but the kitchen sink on our camping trip.

everything humanly possible

- everything in the range of human powers

The doctors did everything humanly possible to save the man after the accident.

the exception that proves the rule

- an exception to a rule proves that the rule exists

The salesman is very quiet and shy and he is the exception that proves the rule in his company.
Everybody else is very talkative.

exception to the rule

- someone or something which differs from the usual/normal/theory/rule

Dogs for blind people are the exception to the rule related to taking animals on a bus.

excuse (someone)

- to forgive someone

We excused the man for his rude comments because he did not know any better.

explain (oneself)

- to give an explanation for something wrong that you have done

The director was forced to explain himself after the accounting problems were discovered.

explain (something) away or explain away (something)

- to explain something so that it seems less important

The sales clerk tried to explain away the problem with the sales receipt.

express (one's) anger

- to release one's anger

The man often loses his temper which is not a good way to express his anger.

extend credit to (someone)

- to permit someone to buy something on credit

The bank extended credit to the small company so that they could continue to operate.

extend one's sympathy to (someone)

- to express sympathy to someone

We extended our sympathy to the family of the dead woman.

extenuating circumstances

- the special circumstances that cause something to happen

We were able to avoid paying the parking ticket because of extenuating circumstances.

eye of the storm

- the center of a problem

The politician was in the eye of the storm because of the accounting scandal.

eyeball-to-eyeball

- face to face

I sat eyeball-to-eyeball with our boss during the meeting.

eyes are bigger than one's stomach

- one takes or wants more food than he or she can eat

The man's eyes are bigger than his stomach. He will never finish the food that he took.

eyes in the back of one's head

- the ability to know what is happening behind one's back

The man has eyes in the back of his head and you can never borrow anything without him knowing about it.

eyes pop out

- much surprised

The woman's eyes popped out when she saw her name in the newspaper.

F

face down (someone)

- to confront someone boldly, to defy someone

We decided to face down our competitors and try to stay in business.

face the music

- to accept the consequences of something

The boy must face the music for his actions very soon.

face to face

- in person

I had a face-to-face meeting with my supervisor to talk about my job performance.

face up to (something)

- to accept something that is not easy to accept

My friend must face up to the fact that he will never have enough money to buy a car.

face value

- the value or price printed on a stamp/bond/paper money etc.

I sold the postage stamps at their face value.

face value

- the truth of something on the surface

The woman is a very nice person but you must take what she says at face value.

fact of the matter

- the truth is, the most important thing is

The fact of the matter is that we must finish the project this week.

facts of life

- the facts about sex or marriage or birth that one should know

The boy is too young to know about the facts of life.

facts speak for themselves

- the known facts about something clearly show the answers to any questions about it

The facts speak for themselves and there is no reason to ask any questions about the problem.

fade away

- to gradually diminish in time or distance or color

The words on the book have begun to fade away.

fair and impartial

- fair and unbiased

The criminal was given a fair and impartial trial by the court.

fair and square

- completely fair, honestly

The British team won the game fair and square.

fair game

- someone or something that you feel you can easily attack

Our company is fair game as a takeover target by other companies.

fair play

- justice, equal and fair action

The boy believes in fair play and is a good person to have on our team.

a fair shake

- honest treatment

The woman was not given a fair shake at the inquiry into her behavior.

fair to middling

- a little better than acceptable, so-so

I was feeling fair to middling when my friend asked me how I was.

fair-weather friend

- a person who is a friend only during good times

The man is a fair-weather friend and you cannot rely on him if you have a problem.

fall Idioms**fall apart**

- to become to not work properly

The equipment fell apart soon after we bought it.

fall apart at the seams

- to separate at the seams (for material that is sewn together), to fall apart

My backpack was falling apart at the seams so I bought a new one.

fall asleep

- to go to sleep

I fell asleep as soon as I went to bed.

fall back

- to move back, to go back

The runner fell back from the other runners during the race.

fall back on (someone or something)

- to seek help when other things have failed

The woman had to fall back on her father when her business began to have problems.

fall behind

- to fail to keep up with work/studies/payments etc.

I fell behind with my homework at the beginning of the term and had problems throughout the year.

fall by the wayside

- to give up or fail before the end of something

The man fell by the wayside and could no longer compete in the design competition.

fall down on the job

- to fail to do something properly

The man fell down on the job so they replaced him with another worker.

fall flat (on one's face)

- to be unsuccessful, to fail

My attempt at humor fell flat and now the girl does not like me.

I fell flat on my face when I tried to impress the girl with my story.

fall for (someone or something)

- to begin to like or love someone or something

The man fell for the woman at the bank but was afraid to ask her for a date.

We fell for the new apartment when we first saw it.

fall from grace

- to lose approval

The politician fell from grace with the public during the money scandal.

fall head over heels

- to fall down

The little boy fell head over heels down the hillside.

fall head over heels in love with (someone)

- to fall deeply in love with someone

My sister fell head over heels in love with a boy in her English class.

fall ill

- to become ill

My father fell ill with a cold last week.

fall in love with (someone or something)

- to begin to experience feelings of love for someone or something

I fell in love with the girl the first time that I saw her at the restaurant.

We fell in love with the house when we first saw it.

fall in with (a group of people)

- to become associated with a group of people (usually used when you fall in with a bad group of people)

The boy fell in with a bad group of friends and began to have problems at school.

fall into a trap

- to become caught in someone's scheme

The criminals fell into a trap that the police had prepared for them.

fall into line

- to stand properly in a row (like soldiers)

The soldiers fell into line as they waited for the inspection.

fall into line

- to conform to a certain course of action

The players fell into line after the coach became more strict during practice.

fall into place

- to fit together, to become organized

Everything fell into place and we were able to prepare for our trip to Brazil.

fall off

- to decrease

The number of tourists to the island is falling off.

fall off the wagon

- to return to use alcohol or drugs after stopping for awhile

The man fell off the wagon after he had stopped drinking for three years.

fall on deaf ears

- to ignore something that is intended for you

My complaints to my boss always fall on deaf ears.

fall on hard times

- to meet many troubles

The town fell on hard times after the computer company moved to another town.

fall out of use

- to be no longer used

CD players have fallen out of use recently.

fall out with (someone) over (something)

- to disagree or quarrel with someone about something

I fell out with my roommate over who should clean the bathroom.

fall over backwards (to do something)

- to do everything possible to do something or please someone

The teacher fell over backwards to help his students.

fall over oneself to (do something)

- to be extremely eager to do something or please someone

The couple fell over themselves in their effort to please their host.

fall short of (one's expectations)

- to be not as good as one expected

The new movie fell short of people's expectations and attendance is very low.

fall short of (something)

- to not have enough of something

The campaign fell short of the amount of money that it had hoped to gather.

fall through

- to fail, to not happen

My plan to go abroad fell through when my father refused to lend me some money.

fall to (someone) to do (something)

- to become the responsibility of someone to do something

It usually falls to me to tell my roommates to be quiet.

fall upon/on (someone or something)

- to attack someone or something

The wolves fell upon the deer and quickly killed it.

a falling-out (with someone)

- a disagreement or quarrel with someone

We had a falling-out during our holiday and we have not spoken since.

false move

- a movement that someone may see as threatening, a move that can cause trouble or damage

If the driver had made one false move there would have been an accident.

familiar with (someone or something)

- to have knowledge of someone or something

My friend is familiar with the streets in our city.

fan the flames of (something)

- to make a situation worse

The speech by the labor leader fanned the flames of the angry workers.

far and away the best

- without doubt the best

The basketball player is far and away the best player on the team.

far and wide

- everywhere, in all directions

We looked far and wide for the book but we could not find it.

far be it from (someone) to do (something)

- it is not really someone's place to do something, it is not appropriate for someone to do something

Far be it from me to tell the cleaning lady how to do her job.

a far cry from (something)

- something very different from something

The man's statement today is a far cry from what he told me yesterday.

far from it

- not at all

"Far from it," I answered when the supervisor asked me if I was finished my work.

far into the night

- late into the night

I studied far into the night because I had a big test the next day.

far out

- to be strange

The man's sense of humor was far out and nobody understood him.

farm (something) out or farm out (something)

- to have someone else do something, to send something away to have it done

We farmed out the printing to another company in order to save money.

fast and furious

- very rapidly

The questions were coming fast and furious during the job interview.

fast buck

- money earned quickly and easily

The man is always trying to make a fast buck without working hard.

fast talker

- a con artist, a clever talker who convinces others easily

The man is a fast talker and you should be careful not to believe everything that he says.

fat chance

- little or no possibility, almost no chance

Fat chance that my friend will let me borrow his car. He never lets me borrow anything.

fat of the land

- the best of everything (without having to work for it)

My friend wants to move to the country and live off the fat of the land.

favor (someone) with (something)

- to provide someone with something good

The queen favored the charity workers with her presence.

favorite son

- a political candidate supported by his home area

We voted for the candidate because he is the favorite son of our state.

feast one's eyes on (someone or something)

- to look at someone or something with pleasure

We stood at the top of the canyon to feast our eyes on the most beautiful scenery in the world.

a feather in one's cap

- something that you achieve and are proud of

Winning the spelling contest was a feather in the boy's cap.

feather one's nest

- to enrich oneself (while holding public office or a trusted job etc.)

The mayor has been feathering his nest for many years and is now very rich.

fed up with (someone or something)

- to be disgusted or bored with someone or something

I think that the worker is fed up with the constant complaints of his boss.

feed one's face

- to eat

We stopped at the small restaurant to feed our face.

feed (someone) a line

- to deceive someone

The man was feeding me a line about his plans to open the new restaurant.

feed the kitty

- to contribute money to a special collection

Everyone had to feed the kitty to collect money for the coffee fund.

feel Idioms

feel at home

- to feel comfortable and relaxed (as if you were at your home)

I always feel at home when I visit my friend.

feel dragged out

- to feel exhausted

I was feeling dragged out so I went home and went to bed.

feel fit

- to feel well and healthy

I feel fit so I plan to go for a long walk this weekend.

feel free to do (something)

- to feel like you are permitted to do something

Everybody felt free to walk around the restaurant after the party began.

feel it beneath oneself to do (something)

- to feel that one would be lowering oneself to do something

The young girl feels it beneath her to help clean the bathroom.

feel like a million dollars

- to feel wonderful

I feel like a million dollars today so I think that I will go for a long walk.

feel like a new person

- to feel refreshed and renewed

I felt like a new person after I had a shower.

feel like doing (something)

- to be in the mood to do something, to want to do something

I do not feel like doing the dishes now.

feel like going (somewhere)

- to be in the mood to go somewhere, to want to go somewhere

I did not feel like going to a movie so I stayed home.

feel like having (something)

- to want to have something

I did not feel like having milk so I had water.

feel on top of the world

- to feel very good

I feel on top of the world and I plan to go dancing tonight.

feel out of place

- to feel that one does not belong in a place or situation

I sometimes feel out of place when I go to an expensive restaurant.

feel out (someone) or feel (someone) out

- to talk or act carefully with someone in order to find out what he or she thinks

I will feel out my boss this weekend about my chance for a promotion.

feel put upon

- to feel that someone is taking unfair advantage of you

My sister always feels put upon when the relatives of her husband come to visit.

feel (something) in one's bones

- to sense something

I feel it in my bones that I will win the lottery this month.

feel sorry for (someone)

- to pity someone, to feel compassion for someone

I feel sorry for my friend who recently lost his job.

feel the pinch

- to have problems caused by having too little money

The family is beginning to feel the pinch since the husband lost his job.

feel up to (do something)

- to feel healthy enough or rested enough to do something

I do not feel up to going to the game.

one's feet are on the ground

- one has sensible ideas

My father is a good man and always has his feet on the ground.

fence (someone) in or fence in (someone)

- to restrict someone in some way

I always feel fenced in when I visit my friend on the small island.

ferret out (something) from (someone) or ferret (information or something) out of (someone)

- to get something from someone by being persistent

I tried hard to ferret out the time of the party from my friend.

few and far between

- not many, rare, unusual

The gas stations were few and far between on the mountain highway.

fiddle around

- to tinker with something, to do something in an unplanned way

I tried fiddling around with the computer printer but it still will not work.

fiddle while Rome burns

- to do nothing while a disaster is happening

The economy is becoming worse while the government does nothing. They want to fiddle while Rome burns.

field a call

- to pick up a telephone call

The salesman fielded many calls when the new product appeared.

field questions

- to answer questions

The speaker began to field questions after he finished talking.

fifty-fifty

- equally, evenly

We divided the cost of the trip fifty-fifty.

fight a rearguard action

- to try very hard to prevent something from happening when it is probably too late to prevent it

The government is fighting a rearguard action to try and win the election.

fight against time

- to hurry to do something quickly, a fight to do something quickly

The rescue party was fighting against time to save the men who were trapped in the coal mine.

fight like cats and dogs

- to argue and fight with someone (usually used for people who know each other)

The two children were fighting like cats and dogs when we entered the room.

fight tooth and nail

- to fight fiercely or with all one's strength

I am fighting tooth and nail to get a transfer to another department.

fighting chance

- a good possibility of success if you try hard

I did not have a fighting chance to get my job application finished on time.

figure on (something)

- to depend on something, to be sure about something

You can figure on many people coming to the party next week.

figure out (someone or something) or figure (someone or something) out

- to try to understand someone or something, to solve something

I finally figured out how to use the new DVD recorder.

fill a prescription

- to get some medicine from a pharmacy (drug store) with the orders from a doctor

The man went to the drug store to fill a prescription.

fill in for (someone)

- to replace someone temporarily

My friend is filling in for the librarian this week.

fill in (something) or fill (something) in

- to write words in blank spaces

"Please fill in this form and give it to the receptionist."

fill (someone's) shoes

- to substitute for someone and be able to do a satisfactory job

Although he is a good supervisor, he is unable to fill the shoes of those who came before him.

fill out (something) or fill (something) out

- to write down the facts that are required (in a report or form etc.)

We must fill out the forms before we can have an interview for the job.

fill (someone) in or fill in (someone)

- to tell someone the details about something

"I will fill you in later about our plans for the weekend."

fill the bill

- to be suitable for what is required

I think that the new equipment should fill the bill for us.

filled to the brim

- to be filled up to the top edge (brim) of something

The coffee cup was filled to the brim.

find Idioms**find fault with (someone or something)**

- to criticize someone or something, to complain about something

My boss finds fault with everything that I do.

find it in one's heart to (do something)

- to have the compassion or courage to do something

I could not find it in my heart to tell the little boy about his dead dog.

find one's feet

- to become used to a new situation or experience

My uncle is finally finding his feet in his new job.

find one's own level

- to find the position to which one is best suited

The teacher helped the child find his own level in the reading class.

find one's tongue

- to be able to begin to talk

I could not find my tongue when I stood in front of the crowd of people.

find one's way

- to discover the route to a place

We were lost for over an hour but we finally found our way.

find oneself

- to discover what one's talents and preferences are, to find one's purpose in life

The woman went to Europe to try and find herself.

find out (something) or find (something) out

- to learn or discover something

The boy's mother is angry at him because she found out that he had quit his French class.

fine and dandy

- all right, okay

It is fine and dandy that the event will be held next Saturday.

a fine how-do-you-do

- a predicament

We were in a fine how-do-you-do when our car stopped working.

fine kettle of fish

- an unsatisfactory situation

It was a fine kettle of fish when my friend said that he could not come to the wedding.

fine print

- the part of a document that you cannot easily notice because of the small size of the print but which often contains very important information

I read the fine print on the contract before I signed it.

fine state of affairs

- an unpleasant situation

The mess in the bathroom was a fine state of affairs and I had to deal with it quickly.

a fine-toothed/tooth comb

- a very careful check of something

We went over the apartment with a fine-toothed comb but I could not find my keys.

finger in the pie

- a part ownership of something or responsibility for something

My uncle has his finger in the pie of many small companies in our town.

fire a gun

- to shoot a gun

I fired a gun for the first time at my uncle's farm.

fire away at (someone or something)

- to shoot at someone or something, to ask many questions

The students began to fire away at the speaker after he finished his speech.

firing on all cylinders

- to be working and making every possible effort

We were firing on all cylinders when we began work on the new project.

first and foremost

- the first and most important

First and foremost, we need a new computer for our office.

first come, first served

- the person who comes first will have his turn first, the person who comes to the food first will get served food first

"First come, first served" my aunt called as she put the food on the table.

first of all

- the very first thing

First of all, we prepared the garden and then we planted the seeds.

first off

- the first thing

First off, the policeman told us that we had been driving too fast.

first out of the gate

- the first person to begin a project

The businessman was the first out of the gate in the effort to raise money for the new concert hall.

first-rate

- excellent, superior, of the best quality

The movie that we saw yesterday was first-rate.

first-run

- new, shown for the first time

There are many first-run movies that I have not seen.

first-string

- the best group of players on a team

Our team will use their first-string players for the game today.

first things first

- the most important things must be taken care of first

We did first things first and cleaned the kitchen before cleaning the living room.

firsthand

- directly

I learned the news from my sister firsthand.

fish for a compliment

- to try and get someone to give you a compliment

The girl was fishing for a compliment when she asked her friend about her new dress.

fish for (something)

- to try to find information etc. about something

The woman is always fishing for information when I meet her at work.

fish in troubled waters

- to involve oneself in a difficult or dangerous situation in order to gain an advantage

The politician was fishing in troubled waters in order to gather information about the scandal.

fish or cut bait

- to do something yourself or quit and let someone else do it, to either do something or stop trying to do it

It was time to fish or cut bait - either buy the car or stop asking questions about it.

a fish out of water

- someone who does not fit in

The man was like a fish out of water at the expensive restaurant.

fishy

- to be strange and suspicious

Something is fishy with the man's excuse for being late for work.

fit Idioms

fit and trim

- to be slim and in good physical shape

My sister looked fit and trim after spending six weeks at the resort.

fit as a fiddle

- to be healthy and physically fit

My grandfather is ninety years old but he is as fit as a fiddle.

fit for a king

- to be totally suitable (just like for a king)

The food at the wedding was fit for a king.

fit in with (someone or something)

- to be comfortable or in harmony with someone or something

The new boy fits in with the other children very well.

fit like a glove

- to fit perfectly

My new pair of jeans fit like a glove.

fit (someone or something) in

- to make time for someone or something

I try hard to fit some exercise in every morning.

fit (someone) into a schedule

- to be able to enter someone into a schedule and have the time to see him or her

The doctor was not able to fit me into her schedule.

fit (someone) out with (something)

- to provide someone with something

The store helped to fit us out with camping equipment for our holiday.

fit (someone) to a T

- to suit a person very well

My cousin's new job fits her to a T.

fit the mold

- to do what you expect, to do what is considered usual (usually used in the negative - does not fit the mold)

Our teacher does not fit the mold of someone who volunteers to help homeless people every weekend.

fit to be tied

- to be very angry or upset

My boss was fit to be tied when he heard that I was going to take a month off from work this summer.

fit to kill

- to be wearing very fancy clothes

The woman looked fit to kill when she went to the restaurant.

fix (someone) up with (someone)

- to help someone get a date by arranging a meeting between the two people

I am trying to fix my sister up with my best friend.

fix (someone's) wagon

- to punish or get even with someone

I decided to fix the woman's wagon after she complained to my boss about me.

fix up (something) or fix (something) up

- to repair something, to put something back in good condition

We want to fix up our house this summer.

fizzle out

- to fail after a good start, to end in failure

The party began to fizzle out at midnight after many people went home.

flare up

- to become suddenly angry, to begin again suddenly

The fighting flared up again after the United Nations soldiers left the town.

flash in the pan

- someone or something that makes a flashy start and then fails

The man's sports career was a flash in the pan. Recently, I have not heard anything about him.

flat broke

- to have no money

I am flat broke now that I stopped working last month.

flat out

- without hiding anything, openly

I told my friend flat out that I would not go to the party with her.

flea in one's ear

- an annoying hint, an idea or answer that is not welcome

Our boss has a flea in her ear about changing the way that our holiday schedule works.

flea market

- a place where antiques or secondhand goods are sold

We went to a flea market last Saturday to try and buy some dishes.

one's flesh and blood

- a close relative

The girl is my flesh and blood so I felt terrible when she got into trouble.

flesh (something) out or flesh out (something)

- to make something more detailed or bigger

We worked hard during the weekend to flesh out our agreement.

a flight of fancy

- an idea that is out of touch with reality or possibility

It was a flight of fancy that we would think of trying to climb Mt. Everest.

flip one's lid

- to become very excited, to lose one's temper

My father flipped his lid when I told him about the large telephone bill.

flip out

- to go crazy, to become very angry

My friend flipped out when she heard that I had damaged her car.

flirt with the idea of (doing something)

- to think about doing something

We flirted with the idea of buying a new house but we decided not to.

float (someone) a loan

- to loan someone money

I asked the bank to float me a loan so that I could buy a new car.

flora and fauna

- plants and animals

We took some books to the cottage so that we could learn about the flora and fauna of the area.

flunk out

- to fail a course, to fail school

My friend flunked out of his computer course at school.

flush with (something)

- to be even with something

The two pieces of wood were flush with each other so we glued them together.

flush with (something)

- to have lots of something

We were flush with cash so we decided to go on a nice holiday.

fly-by-night

- an unreliable business or person

The new company is a fly-by-night operation.

fly by the seat of one's pants

- to do a job instinctively rather than by using concrete information

I had to fly by the seat of my pants when my boss left me alone for one week.

fly in the face of (someone or something)

- to disregard or defy someone or something

The demands of the woman were beginning to fly in the face of anything that was reasonable.

a fly in the ointment

- a small thing that spoils one's enjoyment of something

The problem with the music was a fly in the ointment during the wedding ceremony.

fly into the face of danger

- to take great risks

The pilot was flying into the face of danger when he went to fight the forest fire.

fly off the handle

- to become angry

My friend flew off the handle when he saw the bill for the meal.

fly the coop

- to escape

The prisoner was able to fly the coop when the guard was not looking.

flying high

- to be very happy, to be joyful

My neighbor has been flying high since she won a car.

foam at the mouth

- to be very angry (like a mad dog)

My father was foaming at the mouth when I told him that I had damaged his car.

fogged in

- to have so much fog that traffic (often airplanes) cannot move

The airport was fogged in and we could not leave on our flight .

foist (something) off on (someone) or foist off (something) on (someone)

- to force someone to take something that they do not want

I tried to foist my old bicycle off on my friend but he would not take it.

fold (something) up or fold up (something)

- to put an end to something (a business etc.)

The number of people coming to the exhibition was very low so we decided to fold up our exhibit and go home.

follow Idioms**follow in (someone's) footsteps/tracks**

- to follow someone's example, to follow someone exactly

The boy is following in his father's footsteps and has decided to work for a bank.

follow one's heart

- to act according to one's feelings

The boy will follow his heart and study art rather than computer science.

follow one's nose

- to go straight ahead, to be guided by instinct

We followed our nose until we found the train station.

follow orders

- to do as one has been instructed

The soldiers were following orders when they attacked the village.

follow (someone's) lead

- to do as someone else does

Everybody followed my lead and came to work early.

follow suit

- to do as someone else has done, to follow someone's example, to play a card of the same suit that someone else has put down

I followed suit and left work early on Friday just as my boss had done.

follow the crowd

- to do what everyone else is doing

We decided to follow the crowd and go to the basketball game.

follow through with (something)

- to continue or finish an action that one has started

My neighbor said that he would help me paint my house but he did not follow through with his offer.

follow-up meeting

- a meeting where you discuss previous business

We will have a follow-up meeting to discuss the new product.

follow up (something) or follow (something) up

- to make (one action) more successful by doing something more

The doctor followed up his phone call in the morning with a visit in the afternoon.

fond of (someone or something)

- to like someone or something

Our daughter is very fond of her grandfather.

food for thought

- something worth thinking about, something that provides mental stimulation

I do not agree with the proposal but it does give me food for thought.

fool around

- to spend time playing rather than working, to waste time

If the man would spend less time fooling around he would be able to get more work done.

a foot in the door

- an opening or opportunity to do something

I got a foot in the door when the company accepted my application.

foot the bill

- to pay for something

The company will foot the bill for my move to Paris.

footloose and fancy-free

- to be without responsibilities or commitments

The couple were footloose and fancy-free and they could do whatever they wanted.

for Idioms**for a song**

- for very little money, very cheaply

I was able to buy my new car for a song.

for all (something)

- in spite of something, even with something

For all the time that the boy spends studying, his marks are very low.

for all I care

- I do not care if something happens

"For all I care, you do not have to meet me again."

for all I know

- according to the information that I have

"For all I know, my friend may have already quit his job."

for all intents and purposes

- practically speaking

For all intents and purposes, the meeting was finished and everybody went home.

for all one is worth

- as hard as one can

"I will try, for all I am worth, to help you get the job at the supermarket."

for all practical purposes

- for what might be reasonably expected

For all practical purposes, our car was no longer suitable for our large family.

for all the world

- for anything, for any price

For all the world, I do not know what my friend is trying to tell me.

for better or worse

- depending on how one looks at a matter, including both the good or bad effects of something

For better or worse, I have decided to quit my job and move to Brazil.

for certain

- without doubt, certainly, surely

The best player will not be playing in the game tonight for certain.

for crying out loud

- used to show that you are surprised or angry

"For crying out loud, please turn your radio down a little."

for days on end

- for many days

The man is able to go without sleep for days on end.

for dear life

- as though afraid of losing one's life

The mountain climber held on to the rock for dear life as he waited for someone to rescue him.

for fear of (something)

- because of the fear of something

We stayed home all weekend for fear of getting hit by the big storm.

for free

- for no charge or cost

We were able to get a television set from our neighbor for free.

for good

- permanently

We have decided to move to Los Angeles for good.

for good measure

- as a little extra, as a little more

The recipe called for one piece of garlic but for good measure we put in four pieces.

for hours on end

- for many hours

The boy often plays video games for hours on end.

for instance

- for example

a) "What kind of food do they serve there"

b) "They have everything. Pasta, for instance and sushi and hamburgers."

for keeps

- always, forever

I told the boy that he could have the baseball bat for keeps.

for kicks

- for fun

We decided to go to the airport to watch the airplanes for kicks.

for life

- for the remainder of one's life

They got married last year and they plan to stay married for life.

for love or money

- by any means available

We were not able to get our boss to agree to the proposal for love or money.

for now

- temporarily

I do not plan to buy a new computer for now.

for once

- only one time

For once, my friend listened to what I was saying. Usually he ignores me.

for one's (own) part

- from one's point of view

For my part, I do not plan to help with the staff dinner.

for one's (own) sake

- for one's benefit

I told my aunt that for her own sake she must stop smoking.

for openers

- to start with

For openers, we decided to start the weekend with a nice meal.

for real

- to be genuine, to be real

The attitude of the woman was not for real and nobody believed her.

for safekeeping

- in order to keep something safe

I put the valuable stamps in the bank for safekeeping.

for sale

- to be available to buy

There was a sign in front of the house that said it was for sale.

for short

- in a short form

The man always uses his nickname for short.

for sure

- without doubt, certainly, surely

I will go to the movie with you for sure next week.

for that matter

- about something, with regard to something

"I do not want to go shopping with you, and for that matter, I do not want to go anywhere with you."

for the asking

- on request, by asking

We can get a free ticket to the concert for the asking.

for the better

- an improvement

It was for the better that the old hospital was closed down.

for the birds

- something that you do not like, something that is not to be taken seriously

Getting up early every morning is for the birds.

for the duration (of something)

- for the whole time that something continues

We had to use the outside classroom for the duration of the semester.

for the good of (someone or something)

- for the benefit of someone or something

They added the physical fitness class to the school curriculum for the good of the students.

for the heck/hell of it

- just for fun

We went to the river to throw stones, just for the heck of it.

for the life of (someone)

- even if one's life were threatened (used with a negative and usually used when trying to remember something)

For the life of me I could not remember where I put my house keys.

for the most part

- mostly, in general

For the most part I was finished my work so I decided to go home.

for the record

- a record of a particular fact is made

For the record, I told the police officer about the events of the previous year.

for the sake of (someone or something)

- for the good of someone or something

My father decided to quit his job for the sake of his health.

for the time being

- temporarily, for now, for awhile

We really need a new car but for the time being we will continue to use our old one.

for the world

- under any conditions

I would not sell my car for the world.

force (someone's) hand

- to make someone do something sooner than planned

I forced the manager's hand and made him tell me about his plans for our company.

force (someone) to the wall

- to push someone to an extreme position

The company forced the union to the wall during the negotiations for the new contract.

force (something) down (someone's) throat

- to force someone to do or agree to something that he or she does not want

I wish that my friend would not force her ideas down my throat.

a force to be reckoned with

- someone or something that is important and should not be ignored

The young man is a force to be reckoned with in the wrestling world.

a foregone conclusion

- a conclusion that is already decided

It was a foregone conclusion that the opposition party would win the election.

forever and a day

- a very long time, forever, always

It took forever and a day to get the book that we ordered from the bookstore.

forever and ever

- forever

The little boy promised that he would be a good boy forever and ever.

forge ahead (with something)

- to make rapid progress with something (usually against some difficulties)

There are many problems with the project at work but we are forging ahead to try and complete it.

fork out money for (something) or fork money out for (something)

- to pay money for something

I had to fork out much money to have my car fixed.

fork over (something) or fork (something) over

- to hand over something, to give something

The robber told me to fork over my money or he was going to shoot me.

form an opinion

- to make an opinion

Everybody quickly formed an opinion about the new teacher.

forty winks

- a short nap, a short sleep

I grabbed forty winks when I got home from work.

foul one's own nest

- to harm one's own interests

The union fouled their own nest with their dishonest behavior.

foul up (something) or foul (something) up

- to do badly, to mess something up

There was a problem with our hotel reservations which fouled up our plans.

one's frame of mind

- one's mental state - either good or bad

I made sure that my boss was in a good frame of mind before I asked him for a holiday.

fraught with danger

- to be full of something dangerous and unpleasant

The mountain adventure was fraught with danger.

freak out

- to become angry or lose control of oneself

I freaked out when I discovered that my reservation had not been made.

free and clear

- without owing any money

The couple owns their house free and clear.

free and easy

- carefree, informal

The man's attitude toward his work is free and easy.

free as a bird

- completely free

We were as free as a bird so we decided to go on a long holiday.

free-for-all

- a disorganized fight or contest involving everyone

The players were involved in a free-for-all during the game and seven players were suspended.

a free hand

- much freedom to do something

We had a free hand to design the sports program for the university.

a free translation

- a translation that is not totally accurate

The newspaper printed a free translation of what the diplomat said.

freeload

- to accept food and housing at the expense of another

The boy was angry at his brother for freeloading and never trying to find a job.

freeze (someone) out or freeze out (someone)

- to prevent someone from getting a share in something by unfriendly or dishonest treatment

The man froze his partner out of the profits from the sale of the land.

fresh out of (something)

- to have used up all of something, to have sold the last of something

The bakery was fresh out of brown bread so we had to go to the supermarket.

frighten (someone) out of his or her wits

- to frighten someone severely

The little boy was frightened out of his wits by the big dog.

frighten (someone) to death

- to frighten someone severely

I almost frightened the woman to death when I met her on the dark stairs.

frighten the living daylights out of (someone)

- to frighten someone very much

The horror movie frightened the living daylights out of the young girl.

fritter (something) away or fritter away (something)

- to waste something little by little

The man frittered away the money that he had won in the contest.

from Idioms**from A to Z**

- everything about something

The man knows everything from A to Z about cars.

from cradle to grave

- from birth to death

The government looks after its citizens with good medical care from cradle to grave.

from dawn to dusk

- from the rising of the sun to the setting of the sun

The farm workers worked from dawn to dusk everyday in order to pick the lettuce crop.

from day to day

- one day at a time

We did not know from day to day if the weather would be good for the birthday picnic.

from door to door

- moving from one door to another

The children went from door to door to collect money for the earthquake victims.

from hand to hand

- from one person to another person and then to another

We passed the papers from hand to hand until they were all distributed.

from head to toe

- from the top of one's head to one's feet

The boy was covered in mud from head to toe.

from near and far

- from all around

The people came from near and far to see the new stadium.

from now on

- from this moment forward

From now on I will study French every day.

from rags to riches

- from poverty to wealth

The family went from rags to riches when oil was discovered on their farm.

from scratch

- from the very beginning

We decided to build the house from scratch.

from side to side

- moving from one side to the other again and again

The boat was rocking from side to side during the big storm.

from start to finish

- from the beginning to the end

The dinner was a great success from start to finish .

from stem to stern

- from one end to the other, from the front to the back of a ship

The boat was damaged from stem to stern after the big storm.

from the bottom of one's heart

- with great feeling, sincerely

I thanked the doctor from the bottom of my heart for helping my daughter when she was sick.

from the ground up

- from the beginning (as in building a house or other building or a business)

My uncle built his business from the ground up.

from the heart

- sincerely, honestly

The boy gave his girlfriend some flowers with a message from the heart.

from the outset

- from the beginning

I knew from the outset that the recipe would be very good.

from the top

- from the beginning

"Let's take it from the top and begin again."

from the word go

- from the beginning

From the word go, we knew that there would be problems with the new contract.

from time to time

- occasionally

We go to the new restaurant from time to time.

from tip to toe

- from the top to the bottom

We made an effort to clean the statue from tip to toe.

from way back

- since a long time ago, for a long time

I know my friend from way back. In fact, we went to elementary school together.

fruits of one's labor

- the results of one's work

We decided to enjoy the fruits of our labor so we went on a long holiday to Europe.

full-court-press

- a total effort or offensive, an all-out effort to put pressure on someone, a basketball tactic in which the defenders put pressure on the opposing team over the entire court and try to disrupt the other team

The company used a full-court-press in order to pressure the manager to resign.

full-fledged

- complete, having everything that is needed to be something

My cousin became a full-fledged accountant last year.

full of beans

- to be in high spirits, to be energetic

My aunt is full of beans today. She must be excited about something.

full of hot air

- to be full of nonsense, to be talking nonsense

I knew that the man was full of hot air when he began to tell us how to make lots of money.

full of it

- to be full of nonsense

I thought that the woman was full of it when she told me that the business was closed.

full of oneself

- to be conceited, to be self-important

The girl was full of herself and would only talk about things that were important to her.

full steam ahead

- with as much energy and enthusiasm as possible

It was full steam ahead with the project to build the new stadium.

fun and games

- a very difficult task (often used ironically)

It was fun and games today when I wrote my two final exams.

funny bone

- the place at the back of the elbow that tingles when hit

I hit my funny bone today and it still hurts.

funny business

- illegal activity

The truck driver was involved in some funny business that was illegal.

funny ha-ha

- amusing, comical

It was not funny ha-ha but it was still rather amusing.

G

gain ground

- to go forward, to make progress

The toy company is gaining ground in their effort to sell more products.

game plan

- strategy

I do not know if my boss has a game plan for the meeting.

a game that two can play

- a good or bad strategy that two competing sides can both use

The insults from my friend are a game that two can play and if she wants to continue then I will too.

gang up on (someone)

- to attack someone in a group

The children tried to gang up on the boy but he ran away.

garbage in, garbage out

- the quality of information that you put into something will affect the response/outcome

Garbage in, garbage out. The bad information that was used for the story affected the final story that was written.

gas up

- to fill up a gas tank

We must gas up before we leave on our holiday tomorrow.

gear up for (something)

- to prepare for something

The city is gearing up for the Olympic games.

gee whiz

- used as an exclamation to show surprise or other strong feelings

"Gee whiz! Are we really going to go to the circus next week?"

generous to a fault

- to be too generous

My friend is generous to a fault and he sometimes gives too much to his friends.

get Idioms

get a bang out of (someone or something)

- to receive special pleasure from someone or something

My father gets a bang out of the funny birthday cards that we send him.

get a black eye

- to get a bruise or darkened eye after being hit or after bumping into something

The boy got a black eye when he fell in the playground.

get a break

- to get an opportunity or a good deal

I got a break when my friend sold me his car for a cheap price.

get a bright idea

- to have a clever thought or idea (often used as sarcasm)

My father got the bright idea that he should buy a motorcycle.

get a charley horse

- to develop a cramp in the arm or the leg

The swimmer got a charley horse while he was swimming.

get a checkup

- to receive a physical examination from a doctor

I go to the doctor every year to get a checkup.

get a clean bill of health

- to be pronounced healthy by a doctor

I got a clean bill of health when I went to see the doctor.

get a dirty look from (someone)

- to receive a frown from someone

I got a dirty look from the man who was sitting next to my crying child.

get a feel for (something)

- to become accustomed to something and learn how it works, to learn how to do something

I am beginning to get a feel for my new job.

get a fix on (something)

- to receive a reading of a distant object by electronic means

We were able to get a fix on the island and took the boat safely to the harbor.

get a foothold (somewhere)

- to find a starting point somewhere

The new political party is beginning to get a foothold in the big cities.

get a grasp of (something)

- to begin to understand something

I am beginning to get a grasp of the new computer system.

get a grip of oneself

- to take control of one's feelings

The man got a grip of himself and calmed down.

get a head start (on someone or something)

- to start earlier than someone or something, to start earlier than usual

We want to get a head start on our holiday.

get a kick out of (someone or something)

- to enjoy someone or something

My father got a kick out of seeing his old school friend.

get a load of (someone or something)

- to take a good look at someone or something

"Get a load of that man over there with the four dogs."

get a load off one's feet

- to sit down and relax

I sat down and tried to get a load off my feet.

get a load off one's mind

- to express or discuss what one is thinking or worried about

I talked with my supervisor and was able to get a load off my mind regarding our recent problems.

get a lot of mileage out of (something)

- to get much use from something (like a car or other equipment)

I hope to get a lot of mileage out of the new sneakers that I bought last week.

get a lump in one's throat

- to feel like there is something in one's throat (like you are going to cry)

My sister got a lump in her throat when she watched her daughter's graduation.

get a move on

- to hurry up

"Please get a move on. We are already late."

get a raise

- to get an increase in one's salary

My friend was not able to get a raise this year.

get a raw deal

- to receive unfair or bad treatment

The secretary got a raw deal when she had to work late everyday.

get a rise out of (someone)

- to provoke a response from someone

We got a rise out of the teacher when we opened the window in the cold weather.

get a slap on the wrist

- to receive light punishment for doing something wrong

The judge gave the boy a slap on the wrist and did not punish him severely for his crime.

get a suntan

- to make your skin browner or darker by exposing it to the rays of the sun

The girl went to the beach to get a suntan.

get a toehold (somewhere)

- to find a starting point somewhere

The new political party is beginning to get a toehold in rural areas.

get a whiff of (something)

- to learn a little about something (almost by chance)

Whenever the reporters get a whiff of a scandal they start asking questions.

get a wiggle on

- to hurry up, to get going

"Get a wiggle on. I want to arrive at the party before the other guests."

get a word in

- to find a chance to say something when others are talking

The customer could not get a word in while talking to the salesman.

get a word in edgewise

- to manage to join a conversation

I could not get a word in edgewise so I left the meeting.

get across (something) to (someone) or get (something) across to (someone)

- to explain or say something so that someone can understand it

It was difficult to get across the importance of the school safety rules to the children.

get after (someone) to do (something)

- to urge or try to make someone do something that he or she should do but has neglected

I will get after the repairman to fix the computer as soon as he returns.

get ahead

- to advance, to be successful

The woman works hard at her job in order to get ahead.

get ahead of (oneself)

- to do or say something sooner than you should

I was getting ahead of myself when I started asking questions about the job that I did not have.

get ahold of (someone or something)

- to make contact with someone, to obtain something

I have been trying very hard to get ahold of my old high school teacher.

get all dolled up

- to get dressed up in one's best clothes

The woman got all dolled up for the party.

get along

- to leave

It's late so I must get along now.

get along in years

- to grow older

My parents are getting along in years but they are still very healthy.

get along on a shoestring

- to manage with very little money

I had to get along on a shoestring during university.

get along on (something)

- to manage to survive or do well with something

My friend is able to get along on very little money.

The young woman gets along on her good looks very well.

get along well with (something)

- to make progress with something

The boy is getting along well with his studies.

get along with (someone)

- to have a good relationship with someone

I get along with everybody in my company.

get an earful

- to hear much talk or criticism or complaints about something

Our boss got an earful when he asked the employees if they had any complaints.

get around

- to go to different places, to move about

My friend gets around and has been to many different cities.

get around to (do something)

- to finally find time to do something

The apartment manager finally got around to fixing our bath.

get at (someone or something)

- to attack or hit someone or something

Our dog tried to get at the other dog.

get at (something)

- to mean something

I do not know what our boss was trying to get at during the meeting.

get away

- to succeed in leaving, to escape

I was able to get away from work early so I went shopping.

get away from it all

- to go on a holiday

We want to get away from it all this summer and relax somewhere.

get away with murder

- to do something very bad without being caught or punished

The students were able to get away with murder while the substitute teacher was in the school.

get away with (something)

- to avoid punishment for something

The criminal got away with stealing the money and was never caught.

get back

- to return

We got back from London early yesterday afternoon.

get back at (someone)

- to do something bad to someone who has done something bad to you

The girl is angry at her boyfriend and she is getting back at him by not answering the telephone.

get back to (someone)

- to communicate something to someone at a later time, to contact someone later
We were very careful that our complaints did not get back to the school principal.

get back to (something)

- to return to something

I needed a rest before I could get back to my work.

get back together (with someone)

- to resume a relationship or marriage after separating with someone

The man got back together with his wife after separating for three months.

get behind

- to fail to maintain a desired pace or level of progress, to become late

If you get behind with your homework you will not pass your courses.

get behind (a person or idea)

- to support or help someone or something

Many people wanted to get behind the candidate who promised to cut taxes.

get better

- to become better

The boy is beginning to get better at swimming.

get better (at something)

- to improve one's skill at doing something, to improve one's health

The little boy is getting better at riding his bicycle.

get busy

- to become busy

My friend is getting busy recently and I have no time to meet him.

get by (on something)

- to be able to satisfy your needs with a certain amount of something (usually related to money)

The man is able to get by on his small salary because he does not spend much money.

get carried away

- to be overcome by emotion or enthusiasm, to lose one's control or judgement

I got carried away yesterday and cleaned all of my apartment.

get caught in the crossfire

- to be trapped between two lines of enemy fire, to be caught between two arguing people or groups

I do not want to get caught in the crossfire between my boss and the sales manager.

get close to (someone)

- to become close friends with someone

The woman is trying very hard to get close to her youngest daughter.

get close to (something)

- to be almost as good as something, to almost reach or arrive at a goal

The charity is getting close to the final amount of money that they expect to collect.

get cold feet

- to become afraid and hesitant about something at the last minute

The student got cold feet and cancelled his plans to go to China.

get cracking

- to hurry up, to start moving fast, to get started

We must get cracking on this job if we want to finish it before dinner.

get down to brass tacks

- to begin discussing or doing something immediately

"Let's get down to brass tacks and finish this job quickly."

get down to business

- to begin to get serious

When the meeting began everybody got down to business and began to discuss the important issues.

get down to (something)

- to get started to do something

"Let's get down to work so we can go home early."

get down to the nitty-gritty

- to get down to the basic facts

The teacher called us into her office to get down to the nitty-gritty of what had happened earlier.

get dressed up

- to put on one's best clothes

I like to get dressed up when I go to a nice restaurant.

get engaged (to/with someone)

- to make a plan to marry someone

My cousin decided to get engaged last month.

get even (with someone)

- to get revenge on someone

My sister wants to get even with her friend for being late for the concert.

the get-go

- the beginning

Right from the get-go I did not like the new manager.

get going

- to begin, to act, to go

"Let's get going and begin to clean the house."

get going

- to become excited or angry

When the man gets going he will never stop complaining.

get (a) hold of oneself

- to get control of one's emotions

We asked the man who was crying to try and get hold of himself.

get (a) hold of (someone)

- to find a person so that you can speak with him or her

I tried to get hold of my brother last week but he was out of town.

get hold of (something)

- to get possession of something

"If you get hold of a dictionary, could you please let me borrow it for a few minutes."

get in

- to arrive

My friend got in at noon today.

get in on (something)

- to become involved in something

My friend wants to get in on the planning of the summer festival.

get in on the ground floor

- to start at the beginning of something (in hopes of future gain)

I am hoping to get in on the ground floor of the new company.

get in (someone's) hair

- to bother or irritate someone

The woman complained that her young child was always getting in her hair.

get in touch with someone

- to contact someone

I want to get in touch with my friend when I go to New York in August.

get into a jam

- to become involved in trouble or a problem

I got into a jam when I lost the keys to my apartment.

get into a stew about/over (someone or something)

- to be worried or upset about someone or something

My mother is getting into a stew over my aunt not phoning.

get into hot water

- to get into trouble or difficulty

We got into hot water when they found us in the building after it had closed.

get into (something)

- to become interested or involved in something

I do not want to get into an argument with my friend.

We will get into the details of the plan tomorrow.

get into (somewhere)

- to enter somewhere - a car or a class or a university

My friend wants to get into a good university.

I bumped my head as I was getting into the car.

get into the act

- to try to be part of whatever is happening

Everybody at the party wanted to get into the act and join the singers.

get into the swing of things

- to adapt to a new environment or situation

We got into the swing of things after the party started.

get into the wrong hands

- something secret or dangerous is discovered by someone who should not have it

The teacher was careful that the test answers did not get into the wrong hands.

get into trouble

- to become involved in some kind of trouble

The young boys try not to get into trouble when they are home alone.

get involved with (someone)

- to become associated with someone (often romantically)

The bank teller got involved with the bank manager several months ago .

get it

- to understand something, to understand a joke

Everybody was laughing at the joke but I did not get it.

get it all together

- to be in full control of oneself

My friend got it all together and applied for the job at the supermarket.

get it through one's head

- to understand or believe something

The man has got it through his head that he will get a job without making any effort.

get lost

- to lose one's way, to become lost

I got lost on my first day in the city.

Get lost!

- Go away!

The girl told her brother to get lost so she could finish doing her homework.

get mad at (someone or something)

- to become angry with someone or something

I often get mad at my friend when he is late.

get married

- to marry someone

We got married in June of last year.

get mixed up

- to become confused

"I'm sorry but I got mixed up with the dates. That's why I came today."

get nowhere fast

- to make no progress

We are getting nowhere fast in our effort to convince our boss to give us a holiday.

get off

- to escape or avoid punishment

The criminal got off with a very light sentence from the judge.

get off (a bus/train/plane etc.)

- to leave or exit from a bus or train etc.

We will get off the train at the next station.

get off easy

- to escape a serious punishment

The criminals got off easy after they robbed the bank.

get off on the wrong foot (with someone or something)

- to make a bad start with someone or something

I got off on the wrong foot with my boss and our relationship is still not good.

get off one's butt

- to get busy, to start working

My friend should get off his butt and try to find a job.

get off one's high horse

- to become less arrogant

The manager was forced to get off his high horse and act better toward the employees.

get off (someone's) back

- to leave someone alone and not bother him or her

I wish that my supervisor would get off my back.

get off the ground

- to make a successful beginning

My uncle's new business never got off the ground and he must try to sell it.

get off the hook

- to become free from an obligation

I got off the hook and did not have to clean the classroom after school.

get off to a flying start

- to have a successful beginning

The new restaurant got off to a flying start when many people came during the first weekend.

get on in years

- to become older

My uncle is getting on in years and is not very healthy.

get on one's high horse

- to behave with arrogance

Our boss likes to get on his high horse and give orders to everyone.

get on someone's case

- to criticize someone

The boy's mother is always getting on his case when his room is not clean.

get on (someone's) nerves

- to irritate someone

The woman's constant complaining is beginning to get on my nerves.

get on (someone) to do (something)

- to ask or pressure someone to do something

I will get on my friend to return your book tomorrow.

get on the bandwagon

- to join a popular activity or campaign

Everybody got on the bandwagon to support the popular candidate.

get on the good side of (someone)

- to get in someone's favor

I took my friend to a nice restaurant in order to get on her good side.

get one's act together

- to become more organized

My sister finally got her act together and was able to find a new job.

get one's bearings

- to determine where one is

When I got my bearings I was able to easily find my way around the department store.

get one's comeuppance

- to get the punishment that one deserves

The woman got her comeuppance when she was forced to apologize to the other woman in the company.

get one's dander up

- to become angry

You should not talk to the supervisor early in the morning or you may get his dander up.

get one's ducks in a row

- to put one's affairs in order, to get things ready

I got my ducks in a row and was able to find a job easily.

get one's feet wet

- to begin something, to do something for the first time

The writer got his feet wet in the publishing business and he is now ready to start his own business.

get one's fill of (someone or something)

- to receive enough of someone or something

Recently, I have got my fill of fresh corn and I do not want to eat any more.

get one's foot in the door

- to begin to do something that you hope will lead to future success (often used with jobs or careers)

I was able to get my foot in the door of the banking industry when I found a job at a bank.

get one's hands on (someone or something)

- to get someone or something in one's grasp

"When I get my hands on a hammer I will help you fix the door."

get one's head above water

- to get in control of one's situation (often financial situation)

When I get my head above water I will be able to spend less time working.

get one's just deserts

- to get what one deserves

The apartment manager got her just deserts when she was fired for bothering the tenants.

get one's mind out of the gutter

- to stop having inappropriate thoughts

I wish that my friend would get his mind out of the gutter.

get one's money's worth

- to get value for what you have paid for

We got our money's worth when we stayed on the golf course for seven hours.

get one's nose out of (someone's) business

- to stop interfering in someone else's business

The school secretary was told to get her nose out of the teacher's business.

get one's own way

- to be able to do what you want

The boy always gets his own way with his younger brothers.

get one's priorities right

- to choose the correct order of priorities

The woman must get her priorities right and spend more time at her job.

get one's rear in gear

- to hurry up, to get going

"Let's get our rear in gear before it is too late to go to a movie."

get one's say

- to be able to say what one thinks

The meeting was over very quickly but everyone got their say.

get one's sea legs

- to become accustomed to something (like you would become accustomed to the movement of a ship)

After we got our sea legs we were able to get up and walk around the boat.

get one's second wind

- to get a second burst of energy (usually after being tired)

I tried to get my second wind in order to continue my hike up the mountain.

get one's start

- to receive the first major opportunity of one's career

The newspaper owner got his start by selling papers when he was a child.

get one's walking papers

- to get fired

The young man got his walking papers for being late too often.

get one's way

- to be able to do what you want or get what you want

The girl is spoiled and always gets her way.

get one's wires crossed

- to get confused about something

We got our wires crossed and we both went to different places for our meeting.

get out from under (someone or something)

- to escape from a situation that one does not like

I would like to get out from under my boss who is always watching my work.

get out of a jam

- to get free from a problem or bad situation

I got out of a jam this morning when my coworker came to help me finish the job.

get out of bed on the wrong side or get out on the wrong side of bed

- to be in a bad mood

I think that the girl got out of bed on the wrong side as she is not talking to anyone today.

get out of hand

- to get out of control

The party was beginning to get out of hand so we asked everyone to leave.

get out of line

- to disobey or ignore the rules of something

The children were getting out of line when the teacher returned.

get out of (something)

- to avoid doing something that you should do or that you said you would do

I was able to get out of my piano practice yesterday.

get out of (something)

- to take some clothes off so that you can put on more comfortable clothes

I want to get out of my wet clothes quickly.

get out of (somewhere)

- to leave somewhere, to escape

I want to hurry and get out of my house so I will not be late for work.

get out of the way

- to stop obstructing or interfering with someone or something, to escape from something

The car was unable to get out of the way of the truck.

get over (something)

- to overcome a difficulty, to recover from an illness or shock

The woman is having trouble getting over her father's death.

get ready

- to prepare yourself for something

"First I must get ready for work, then I will help you."

get religion

- to develop a strong religious belief

My uncle recently got religion and is serious about it.

get rid of (something)

- to give or throw something away, to sell or destroy something, to make a cold or fever disappear

I bought a new television set so now I want to get rid of my old one.

get rolling

- to get started

"Let's get rolling and try and finish this project today."

get set

- to get ready to start something

Everybody is getting set for the wedding ceremony.

get sick

- to become ill

I got sick yesterday and did not go to the movie.

get sidetracked

- to become diverted from one's task

I began to watch the news and got sidetracked from what I had planned to do.

get (someone)

- to annoy someone

It really gets me when my co-worker comes to work late.

get (someone) down

- to make someone unhappy, to cause discouragement

The long commuting time is getting my friend down so she wants to quit her job.

get (someone's) goat

- to irritate someone

My friend is always getting my goat and I am tired of him.

get (someone or something) out of one's mind/head

- to forget about someone or something

It took me several months to get my old girlfriend out of my mind.

get (something) for a steal

- to buy something for a very low price

I was able to get our television set for a steal.

get (something) off one's chest

- to talk about something that has been bothering you

I told my father about my problem at work so that I could get it off my chest.

get (something) out in the open

- to make something public

We had a frank discussion in order to get everything out in the open.

get (something) out of one's system

- to get rid of the desire to do something

I went on a short holiday so that I could get travelling out of my system.

get (something) out of (something)

- to get some kind of benefit from something

My mother does not understand why my aunt can get something out of going to an opera.

get (something) out of the way

- to take care of some business, to do or finish something

We got our work out of the way and began to plan for the weekend.

get (something) over with

- to finish something (usually something that you do not want to do)

I was very happy to get my exams over with.

get (something) straight

- to understand something clearly

I could not get what my friend was trying to tell me straight.

get (something) through (someone's) thick skull

- to get someone to understand something

I could not get it through my friend's thick skull that I could not go on a holiday with him.

get (something) under control

- to be able to control something

The fire fighters were quickly able to get the fire under control.

get the ax

- to be fired

The man got the ax last week and now he has no job.

get the ball rolling

- to start something

"Let's get the ball rolling and start planning the party."

get the benefit of the doubt

- to receive a decision in your favor when the evidence is neither for you nor against you

I got the benefit of the doubt when I complained about my parking ticket.

get the better of (someone)

- to beat or defeat (someone), to win against someone

My friend got the better of me and won the tennis match.

get the blues

- to become sad or depressed

Every winter my neighbor seems to get the blues.

get the boot

- to be fired from a job, to be told to leave a place

I got the boot from my first job in high school.

The man got the boot from the restaurant for smoking.

get the brush-off

- to be ignored or sent away

I got the brush-off when I asked the girl to dance.

get the cold shoulder

- to be ignored or rejected

My friend got the cold shoulder when he went to the expensive restaurant.

get the day off

- to have a free day from work

I hope to get the day off tomorrow so I can visit my grandfather in the hospital.

get the facts straight

- to get a clear understanding of the facts about something

I do not believe that our supervisor got the facts straight when she heard about our argument.

get the feel of (something)

- to become used to or learn about something

After you get the feel of the new computer it is very easy to use.

get the floor

- to receive official permission to speak to an audience

When the principal finally got the floor everybody was ready to go home.

get the go-ahead

- to receive a signal to start something

The construction company got the go-ahead to begin work on the new stadium.

get the goods on (someone)

- to find out true but often negative information about someone

I finally got the goods on the man and I will talk to the police soon.

get the hang of (something)

- to learn how to do something

The boy was asked to help with the sound system after he got the hang of it.

get the jump on (someone)

- to get ahead of someone

We left home early so that we could get the jump on the other travellers.

get the last laugh

- to laugh at someone who has laughed at you

We got the last laugh when the car that had passed us on the highway got a speeding ticket.

get the lead out

- to hurry

"Get the lead out," I said to my slow friend.

get the lowdown on (someone or something)

- to receive the full story about someone or something

I met a friend for coffee to get the lowdown on our friend who is getting married.

get the message

- to clearly understand the meaning of something

I told my friend to be quiet but I do not think that he got the message.

get the nod

- to be chosen for something

My favorite candidate got the nod to run in the election.

get the once-over

- to receive a quick visual examination

I quickly got the once-over when I arrived for the job interview.

get the picture

- to understand the whole situation

I did not get the picture of what my friend was saying about his new girlfriend.

get the raw end of the deal

- to do badly in a negotiation or a similar situation

I got the raw end of the deal when I received my new work schedule.

get the red-carpet treatment

- to receive very special treatment

The Queen of England got the red-carpet treatment during her trip to Australia.

get the runaround

- to receive a series of excuses and delays

I got the runaround when I went to talk to the company about my parking ticket.

get the sack

- to be fired from a job

I told the employee that if he does not change his work habits he will get the sack.

get the shock of one's life

- to receive a serious emotional shock

I got the shock of my life when I saw my teacher on TV.

get the short end of the stick

- to get less than others

I sometimes get the short end of the stick and I have to do more work than the other students.

get the show on the road

- to start working on something

"Let's get the show on the road and begin work for the day."

get the third degree

- to be questioned in great detail and for a long period of time

The boy got the third degree when he came home late for dinner.

get the upper hand (on someone)

- to get into a position superior to someone

I got the upper hand during my dispute with the apartment manager.

get the worst of (something)

- to be defeated, to receive less benefit than someone else

The man got the worst of the deal when the salesman sold him the used car.

get through (something)

- to complete something, to finish something, to survive something

My friend is having trouble getting through her final exams.

I have much reading that I must get through before tomorrow.

get through to (someone)

- to make someone understand something

I tried talking to the woman but I could not get through to her.

get time off

- to receive a holiday from work

I can never get time off in the summer.

get tired

- to become tired

I want to have a quiet day because I do not want to get tired.

get to (a place)

- to arrive at a place

We will eat dinner when we get to the hotel.

get to (do something)

- to have a chance to do something, to be able to do something

I did not get to go to the circus last week.

get to first base

- to make a start, to succeed

I tried to meet the company president but I could not get to first base.

get to one's feet

- to stand up

The members of the audience got to their feet when the concert finished.

get to the bottom of (something)

- to find out the real cause of something or answer to something

The government wants to get to the bottom of the financial problems in the company.

get to the heart of (something)

- to understand the most important thing about something

We were in the meeting for three hours trying to get to the heart of the problem.

get to the root of a problem

- to get an understanding of the causes of a problem

The purpose of the meeting was to get to the root of the problem about the money.

get tough with (someone)

- to become firm or strict with someone

The school plans to get tough with students who are late.

get under (someone's) skin

- to bother or upset someone

The woman always gets under my skin although I do not really know why.

get under way

- to start

The festival got under way early this morning.

get up

- to get out of bed, to get to one's feet

I got up early today so that I could go fishing with my friend.

I got up after sitting at my computer all morning.

get-up-and-go

- energy, enthusiasm, drive

The man has lots of get-up-and-go and it is difficult to follow him around.

get up enough nerve (to do something)

- to become brave enough to do something

I finally got up enough nerve to ask the woman for a date.

get up on the wrong side of the bed

- to be in a bad mood

My friend got up on the wrong side of the bed this morning and will not talk to anyone.

get up the nerve to (do something)

- to become brave enough to do something

I tried to get up the nerve to ask my friend about his new job.

get used to (someone or something)

- to become accustomed to someone or something

I am slowly getting used to my new job.

get what's coming to you

- to receive the good or bad that you deserve

The criminal got what was coming to him when he was sent to jail for two years.

get well

- to become well, to become healthy again

The boy was sick but now he is getting well.

get wet

- to become wet

I got wet because of the rain.

get wind of (something)

- to hear about something

I got wind of the changes in our company from my friend.

get wise to (someone or something)

- to learn about something that is a secret

The man got wise to the fact that someone was stealing his money.

get with it

- to pay attention, to get busy

I told my friend to get with it or he would have problems with his boss.

get worked up about/over (something)

- to get excited or angry about something

My friend always gets worked up about his problems at work.

get worse

- to become worse

The boy is very sick and is getting worse.

getup

- fancy dress or costume

"What was that strange getup that your friend was wearing the other day?"

ghost of a chance

- very little chance, the smallest chance

The boy does not have a ghost of a chance to finish his homework before class.

gift of the gab

- the ability to talk well

My friend has the gift of the gab and is much fun at a party.

give Idioms

give a little

- to compromise, to show flexibility when negotiating

My friend is easy to travel with because she will always give a little when we have a dispute.

give a wide birth to (someone or something)

- to keep away from someone or something, to keep a safe distance from someone or something

I usually give a wide birth to my boss when he is angry.

give-and-take

- sharing, giving and receiving between people, compromise

You must be willing to give-and-take if you want to have a good marriage.

give away (a secret) or give (a secret) away

- to let a secret become known

I do not want my friend to give away my plans to go to Mexico for a holiday.

give away (something) or give (something) away

- to give something to someone

I will give away my bicycle because I do not need it anymore.

give away the farm

- to offer too much during a negotiation

I tried not to give away the farm during the negotiation.

give birth

- to have a baby

The woman gave birth to a baby boy last night.

give chase to (someone or something)

- to chase or run after someone or something

The police gave chase to the man who robbed the store.

give credence to (someone or something)

- to believe someone or something, to credit someone or something

We did not want to give credence to the man's statement so we did not respond to it.

give credit where credit is due

- to acknowledge or thank someone who deserves it

We gave credit where credit is due and thanked the cook for her hard work.

give free rein to (someone or something)

- to allow someone to be completely in charge of something, to give someone or something the freedom to do something

The man was given free rein to do what he wanted in his new job.

give ground

- to move back, to retreat, to stop opposing someone

Our boss refused to give ground on his plan to change the system of office management.

give in to (someone or something)

- to surrender, to give someone his or her own way, to stop opposing or resisting someone or something

The company gave in to the union's demand for more money.

give it to (someone)

- to punish or scold someone

The father gave it to his son when the boy came back late with the car.

give it to (someone) straight

- to tell something to someone directly

My boss gave it to me straight about my chance to get a promotion.

give off (something) or give (something) off

- to release a smell or something, to produce a smell or something

The garbage was beginning to give off a bad smell because of the hot weather.

The water began to give off steam when it began to boil.

give one's right arm (for something or to do something)

- to give something of great value

I would give my right arm to be able to go to Italy with my friends.

give oneself away

- to show guilt, to show that you have done wrong

The girl gave herself away when she said that she had not been downtown although her boyfriend had seen her there.

give oneself up

- to surrender, to stop hiding or running away

The robbers gave themselves up when the police surrounded the house.

give oneself up to (something)

- to let oneself enjoy something, to not hold oneself back from something

The man gave himself up to enjoy the party although he was feeling sick.

give or take (a certain amount of something)

- plus or minus a small amount of something

I think that the man is about 40 years old give or take five years.

give out

- to fail, to wear out

We went hiking last week but my legs gave out so we had to return early.

give out

- to be gone, to finish

We went camping for a week but our food gave out after only three days.

give out (a sound)

- to utter a sound

The girl gave out a loud scream when she saw the spider.

give out (something)

- to give something to people, to distribute something

We gave out more than six hundred balloons at the shopping center.

give rise to (something)

- to cause something

The problems with the heating system gave rise to several other problems.

give (someone) a big hand

- to clap one's hands in applause, to applaud someone

The audience gave the performer a big hand.

give (someone) a black eye

- to hit someone near the eye so that it becomes dark, to harm someone's reputation

I bumped into the door and it gave me a black eye.

The bad products gave the company a black eye.

give (someone) a blank check

- to give someone the freedom or permission to do what they think is necessary

The new coach was given a blank check by the university to try and improve the team.

give (someone) a break

- to give someone a chance, to provide someone with another opportunity or chance

We decided to give the woman a break and not complain about her bad manners.

give (someone) a bum steer

- to make a misleading suggestion

The store owner gave the police a bum steer when he told them where the robber may have gone.

give (someone) a clean bill of health

- to declare that someone is healthy (usually done by a doctor)

My doctor gave me a clean bill of health during my recent checkup.

give (someone) a dirty look

- to frown or make an angry face at someone

I gave the woman a dirty look when she began talking loudly on her cell phone.

give (someone) a fair shake

- to treat someone fairly

Our company tries to give everyone a fair shake.

give (someone) a free hand (with something)

- to give someone complete control over something

The city gave the homeowners a free hand to plan the new playground.

give (someone) a hand

- to help someone do something

"Please give me a hand to move this piano."

give (someone) a hard time

- to tease someone, to make trouble for someone

The girl gave her boyfriend a hard time about his new haircut.

The new supervisor is giving me a hard time.

give (someone) a head start

- to allow someone to start earlier than others

We gave my friend a head start in the treasure hunting contest.

give (someone) a piece of one's mind

- to scold or become angry with someone

When I met my friend yesterday, I gave her a piece of my mind.

give (someone) a ring/buzz

- to call someone on the telephone

I plan to give my friend a ring when I get home tonight.

give (someone) a run for their money

- to give someone a challenge

Our team gave the stronger team a run for their money during the championship finals.

give (someone) a start

- to startle or surprise someone

The dog gave me a start when it suddenly appeared.

give (someone) a taste of his or her own medicine

- to do something bad to someone after the other person has done something bad to you

I gave my friend a taste of her own medicine after she made me wait for her. I made her wait for me.

give (someone) an earful

- to scold someone, to tell someone much information (usually in an angry way)

I gave my sister an earful when she phoned me.

give (someone) an inch and they will take a mile

- if you give someone a little they will want more, some people are never satisfied

If you give the children an inch they will take a mile so you should be strict sometimes.

give (someone) credit for (something)

- to acknowledge or thank someone for something that they have done

Everybody gave the man credit for saving the life of the girl.

give (someone) enough rope and he or she will hang himself

- give someone enough time and freedom to do what they want and they will make a mistake or get into trouble and be caught

"Don't worry about trying to fight him. If you give him enough rope he will hang himself."

give (someone) one's word

- to make a promise to someone

My friend gave me his word that he will meet me at the library.

give (someone) pause to think

- to cause someone to stop and think

The accident on the highway gave everyone pause to think.

give (someone) the ax

- to fire an employee

We gave the new employee the ax because he was always late for work.

give (someone) the benefit of the doubt

- to assume or believe that someone is right or innocent of something

I gave the man the benefit of the doubt but I think that he is lying.

give (someone) the boot

- to fire someone from a job, to force someone to leave a place

The manager gave the man the boot when he began yelling in the restaurant.

give (someone) the brush-off

- to send someone away, to ignore someone

I gave the woman the brush-off when I saw her in the supermarket.

give (someone) the bum's rush

- to make someone leave a place quickly

The club owner gave us the bum's rush when we began to make too much noise.

give (someone) the cold shoulder

- to be unfriendly to someone

I gave the woman the cold shoulder at the party.

give (someone) the creeps

- to make someone feel uncomfortable

The girl next door is very strange. She gives me the creeps.

give (someone) the eye

- to look or stare at someone (especially in a cold or unfriendly way)

The store manager began to give the boy the eye.

give (someone) the go-ahead

- to give someone permission to begin a project

The sales manager gave us the go-ahead to begin the new sales campaign.

give (someone) the green light

- to give someone permission to begin a project

The city gave us the green light to begin work on the new housing project.

give (someone) the low-down (on someone or something)

- to tell someone the full story or details about someone or something

I gave my friend the low-down on our plans for the weekend.

give (someone or something) the once-over

- to visually examine someone or something quickly

We gave the man the once-over when he walked into the restaurant.

give (someone) the red-carpet treatment

- to give someone very special treatment

The city gave the politician the red-carpet treatment when he came for a visit.

give (someone) the runaround

- to give excuses and delays to someone

We tried to get a refund for our airplane tickets but the company gave us the runaround.

give (someone) the shirt off one's back

- to be very generous to someone

My uncle is very kind and he will give you the shirt off his back.

give (someone) the slip

- to escape from someone

The bank robbers tried to give the police the slip but they were soon caught.

give (someone) the third degree

- to question someone in great detail

The woman gave her son the third degree when he returned home.

give (someone) their due

- to give someone the credit that he or she deserves

You have to give our company president his due. He has saved the company from bankruptcy.

give (someone) what's coming to him or her

- to give someone what they deserve

I gave my neighbor what's coming to her when I complained to the police about her dog.

give (something) a shot

- to try something

I plan to give golfing a shot during my summer holidays.

give (something) a whirl

- to attempt to do something

I decided to give singing a whirl so I joined a singing club.

give (something) one's best shot

- to try very hard

I plan to give the new job my best shot.

give the devil his due

- to give credit to someone who deserves it even if you dislike him or her

I do not like to work with my coworker because he is lazy. However, you have to give the devil his due. He usually gets the job done.

give up

- to abandon or stop something

I have decided to give up my plan to work in Hong Kong for a year.

give up the ghost

- to stop working, to die

My old car finally gave up the ghost so I must buy a new one.

give up the ship

- to stop fighting, to stop trying or hoping to do something

"Please don't give up the ship and quit this company. You still have a useful role to play."

give voice to (one's feelings)

- to express what one feels or thinks

The man has begun to give voice to his feelings about his job.

give way

- to collapse, to fail

The dam gave way and the water flooded the farmland below.

giveaway

- something that is given away free, an act of giving something away, an unintentional betrayal of a secret or repressed feeling or plan

Our supervisor's speech was a giveaway. Now, I know that he is planning to retire.

given to understand (something)

- to understand something plainly and clearly

I was given to understand that I could rent an apartment very cheaply in this area.

glad hand

- to shake hands in a friendly way

The politician likes to glad hand people at the shopping center.

gloss (something) over or gloss over (something)

- to try to make what is wrong or bad seem unimportant, to hide something

The accountant tried to gloss over the amount of money that the company lost last year.

glutton for punishment

- a person who likes difficult or unpleasant tasks

My friend is a glutton for punishment and he will always do the most difficult jobs available.

gnash one's teeth

- to grind one's teeth

I always gnash my teeth before I go to talk to my boss.

go Idioms

go a few rounds with (someone)

- to fight with someone

My friend went a few rounds with his boss yesterday. They had a big argument.

go a long way toward (something)

- to be almost enough, to contribute much to something

The money from the government will go a long way toward building a new library.

go about one's business

- to be busy or start working on something

Everybody is going about their business again after the holidays.

go after (someone)

- to try to catch someone

The police decided to go after the speeding cars near the school.

go after (something)

- to attempt to get something, to strive for something

Our team will go after the championship again this year.

go against the grain

- to go against the natural direction or inclination of something

The man's unfriendly attitude goes against the grain of the usually friendly company.

go ahead

- to move forward

The cars could not go ahead very quickly.

go ahead (and do something)

- to proceed to do something, to continue with something

"Let's go ahead and start now. We can't wait any longer."

go ahead (with something)

- to proceed to do something, to continue with something

The city plans to go ahead with the plan to build a new stadium.

go all out

- to use all of one's energy or resources for something

We plan to go all out for my sister's wedding.

go along

- to move along, to continue

The man invents his stories as he goes along.

go along with (someone)

- to go with someone, to accompany someone

I plan to go along with my friend to the ice cream parlor.

go along with (someone or something)

- to agree with someone, to accept someone's decision or suggestion

Everybody went along with my idea to have a party on the weekend.

go ape

- to become very excited, to behave in a crazy way

My father went ape when he heard how much money I had spent.

go around

- to have enough of something for the people who are present

We did not have enough plates for everyone at the party.

go around (from place to place or person to person)

- to go from one place or person to another

We will go around to several shops until we find a cheap computer.

go around in circles

- to do something without making any progress

My friend is going around in circles and is not making any progress with his essay.

go around the bend

- to go crazy

The store manager seems to be going around the bend.

go astray

- to be led into error or wrongdoing (a person), to be mislaid (an object)

The young boy went astray after spending time with the older boys.

My calculator has gone astray and I cannot find it.

go at it

- to fight or argue with someone

When I entered the room the two men were going at it loudly.

go at it hammer and tongs

- to fight or argue with great strength or energy

The couple go at it hammer and tongs every evening.

go at it tooth and nail

- to fight or argue with great strength or energy

The men were going at it tooth and nail when the police arrived.

go away empty-handed

- to depart with nothing

The boy went away empty-handed after he asked his father for money.

go back on one's word

- to break one's promise

My supervisor went back on his word when he refused to give me a day off.

go bad

- to become rotten or bad

The apples will go bad if they are not eaten soon.

go bananas

- to go crazy, to become silly, to become angry

The father went bananas after he discovered that his son had taken the family car.

go begging

- to be unwanted or unused

Much food went begging when fewer people than expected came to the dinner.

go belly up

- to become bankrupt

The small computer company may go belly up soon.

go broke

- to lose all of one's money

The company went broke and many people lost their jobs.

go by the book

- to follow the rules exactly

Most police officers go by the book when they arrest a criminal.

go cold turkey

- to stop doing something (usually a bad habit) suddenly

I decided to go cold turkey and quit smoking.

go dead

- to stop working or responding

The batteries in my camera went dead yesterday.

The telephone often goes dead when I am talking to my mother.

go door to door

- to go from one house to another house in a neighborhood in order to sell something or for some other reason

The salesman went door to door to sell his product.

go down fighting

- to continue to struggle until one is defeated

The politician plans to go down fighting to try to keep his job.

go down in history

- to be remembered as an important historical event

The concert will go down in history as the biggest in the world.

go down with the ship

- to continue with a project or company right until the end (often in a failing situation)

My company may go bankrupt soon but I plan to stay and go down with the ship.

go downhill

- to become worse and worse

The local economy has been going downhill for many years.

go Dutch

- to each pay for themselves (used for two people)

We always go Dutch when we go on a date.

go easy on (someone or something)

- to be kind or gentle with someone or something

I asked my friend to go easy on my car when he borrowed it.

go for (an amount of money)

- to be sold at a certain price

The new car is going for a lot of money.

go for broke

- to risk everything on one big effort, to try as hard as possible to do something

We are going for broke to try and win the new contract.

go for it

- to decide to do something in an enthusiastic way, to try for something

We decided to go for it and try to climb the mountain.

go for (something)

- to try to get something, to desire something

I have decided to go for the new job at the computer center.

go from bad to worse

- to get worse, to deteriorate

Things are going from bad to worse in our company.

go-getter

- an ambitious person who works hard to become successful

My friend is a go-getter. He works hard and is very successful.

go great guns

- to do something very fast or with great energy

The workers were going great guns when I saw them this morning.

go halves

- to share equally

We decided to go halves on buying a new computer.

go haywire

- to become damaged, to stop working properly

At first, things were going well but later our plans began to go haywire.

go hog-wild

- to behave wildly

The little boys went hog-wild during the birthday party.

go in for (something)

- to choose something as one's particular interest, to occupy oneself with something

My friend is going to university and will go in for medicine.

Many of the students are going in for water sports recently.

go in one ear and out the other

- to hear something but then quickly forget it

Everything that the teacher says goes in one ear and out the other for my friend.

go into detail

- to present and discuss the details of something

The lawyer refused to go into detail about his client's problems.

go into effect

- to become effective (a law or a rule), to start to function

The new parking regulations will go into effect next week.

go into hiding

- to conceal oneself in a hiding place for a period of time

The bank robbers went into hiding after the bank robbery.

go into hock

- to go into debt

I do not want to go into hock in order to buy a new computer.

go into orbit

- to lose one's temper, to become very angry

The bank manager went into orbit when he learned about the missing money.

go it alone

- to do something by oneself

Nobody would help us so we had to go it alone with the project.

go jump in a lake

- to go away and quit bothering someone

My friend wanted to borrow some money from me but I told her to go jump in a lake.

go like clockwork

- to progress in a regular and dependable way

Everything was going like clockwork when suddenly the lights went out.

go off

- to explode

The firecracker went off before I could put it down.

go off

- to begin to ring or buzz

The fire alarm started to go off just as we entered the building.

go off half-cocked

- to act or speak without thinking

Our boss often goes off half-cocked when he is at a meeting.

go off on a tangent

- to suddenly change one's line of thought or course of action

The speaker suddenly went off on a tangent and began to speak about something totally different.

go off (somewhere)

- to leave or depart for somewhere

My friend went off on a trip and did not say good-bye.

go off the deep end

- to become angry or emotional

The man went off the deep end when he saw his picture in the paper.

go off without a hitch

- to proceed or be finished in a smooth manner

The opening of the new airport went off without a hitch.

go on

- to happen

We stopped to see what was going on at the accident.

go on

- to continue

The game will probably go on for an hour after we leave.

go on

- to talk for too long

My friend started to go on about his problems so I decided to leave.

go on

- to be put on something, to fit on something

The top of the jar would not go on so I put it in the garbage.

go on a binge

- to do too much of something

My cousin went on a binge and ate four chocolate bars.

go on a diet

- to start a plan or program to decrease some foods in order to decrease one's weight
I plan to go on a diet at the beginning of the year.

go on a rampage

- to rush around destroying things

The football fans went on a rampage and destroyed many things.

go on and on

- to continue for a long time

The man went on and on with his speech until finally I fell asleep.

go one's own way

- to go or act the way one wants

My friend plans to go his own way and start his own business next year.

go out

- to stop burning, to stop functioning

The candle will probably go out after one hour.

The lights went out in the building last night.

go out

- to leave one's home or workplace

I do not plan to go out tonight.

go out for (something)

- to try something (usually a sport)

My friend is going out for rugby this year.

go out of fashion/style

- to become unfashionable

Striped pants have recently gone out of fashion.

go out of one's way

- to make an extra effort

My aunt went out of her way to help me when I visited her.

go out the window

- to be abandoned, to go out of effect

The school dress code went out the window when the new principal arrived.

go out (with someone)

- to date someone

The girl wants to go out with the boy in her history class.

go over big with (someone)

- to be liked, to be successful

The games went over big at the party.

go over like a lead balloon

- to fail, to do badly

My idea for shorter working hours went over like a lead balloon at the meeting.

go over (someone's) head

- to be too difficult for someone to understand

The explanation of how to operate the machinery went over my head.

go over (someone's) head

- to go directly to someone's superior/boss/supervisor

The clerk was very rude so I decided to go over her head and talk to her supervisor.

go over (something)

- to examine or review something

The accountant will go over the numbers tomorrow.

We plan to go over the question tomorrow.

go over (something) with a fine-toothed comb

- to search through something very carefully (fine-tooth comb is also correct)
We went over the room with a fine-toothed comb while looking for the earring.

go over well with (someone)

- to be liked, to be successful

I think that my idea will go over well with my friends.

go over with a bang

- to succeed in a spectacular way

The opening ceremony went over with a bang and everybody was very happy.

go overboard

- to do something in excess

The man went overboard with the birthday party preparations.

go places

- to have a good future

The young man will go places with his good looks and good education.

go sky-high

- to reach a very high price or level

The price of gasoline has gone sky-high recently.

go so far as to say (something)

- to put something into words

The company president went so far as to say that he may be leaving very soon.

go (someone) one better

- to do something better than someone else, to do more than someone

I decided to go my friend one better and I bought a more expensive present for my girlfriend.

go stag

- to go to an event by oneself (without a date - usually used for men)

I decided to go stag to the wedding.

go steady with (someone)

- to date the same person all the time (usually used for teenagers)

My cousin has been going steady with her boyfriend for two years.

go stir-crazy

- to become anxious because one is confined to a small space

After many days of rain I began to go stir-crazy because I could not leave the house.

go straight

- to become an honest person, to lead an honest life

The man was in prison for two years but now he wants to go straight.

go the distance

- to do the whole amount of something, to finish something

I was able to go the distance and finish my project without any help.

go the extra mile

- to do more than one is required to do to reach a goal

I always try to go the extra mile and help my friends when they need help.

go the limit

- to do as much as possible

I plan to go the limit and try to get the job.

go through

- to be approved, to pass, to be agreed upon

The new law will probably go through next week.

go through (an experience)

- to experience or suffer something, to live through something

The man went through some hard times after he lost his job.

go through changes

- to be involved in changing circumstances

The woman has gone through many changes recently.

go through channels or go through the proper channels

- to use the proper procedures to do something (especially in a hierarchy or bureaucracy)

We must go through the proper channels to get anything done with the city.

go through (someone)

- to have contact with someone (often to get permission or approval from someone with power or authority)

Everybody has to go through the accountant to get money for his or her expenses.

go through (something)

- to examine something carefully, to search carefully for something

The police went through the house to look for a weapon.

I plan to go through my old clothes and give some of them to my friend.

go through (something)

- to discuss something, to look at something, to do something

The teacher will go through the questions after the test.

go through (something)

- to use something completely, to spend or waste money

The man went through his savings very quickly.

We only had a small amount of cooking oil and we went through it very quickly.

go through the mill

- to experience a difficult situation

My friend has gone through the mill with her many recent problems.

go through the motions

- to do something insincerely

The manager went through the motions of apologizing but he was not sincere.

go through the roof

- to go very high

The price of oil is going through the roof.

go through (trouble or something)

- to endure something, to experience something

I had to go through much trouble to get my new passport.

go through with (something)

- to finish something, to do something as planned or agreed

My friend has decided to go through with his plans to finish university.

go to any length

- to do whatever is necessary

The man will go to any length to get what he wants.

go to bat for (someone)

- to support or help someone

I will always go to bat for my friend when he has a problem at work.

go to one's head

- to become conceited

The man's new position has gone to his head and he will not speak to us now.

go to pieces

- to lose one's self-control

The woman went to pieces when she learned about her father's death.

go to pot

- to deteriorate

Our business has gone to pot since the new manager came.

go to rack and ruin

- to reach a very bad state of repair

The building has gone to rack and ruin since the new owners bought it.

go to seed

- to become worn-out or uncared for

The area around the post office is going to seed.

go to (someone's) head

- to make someone too proud

The girl won the beauty contest and now it has gone to her head.

go to the dogs

- to deteriorate, to become bad

Many things in our city have gone to the dogs during the last ten years.

go to the expense (of doing something)

- to pay the cost of doing something

We had to go to the expense of buying a new tent for camping.

go to the trouble (of doing something)

- to make an extra effort to do something

My aunt went to the trouble of buying a new bed for her guests.

go to town

- to work fast or hard, to do something with much energy

We went to town last night and finished painting the bedroom.

go to waste

- to be wasted, to be unused

I did not want the extra food to go to waste so I invited my friend to visit.

go toe-to-toe (with someone)

- to be in close and direct confrontation or competition with someone, to be in close combat with someone

The two men went toe-to-toe in their debate.

The wrestlers went toe-to-toe for the championship.

go together

- to look or sound or taste good together

The red paint and the green sofa do not go together in the apartment.

go too far

- to do more than is acceptable

The man went too far when he accused his boss of lying.

go under

- to fail

The small company went under after only a few months in business.

go under the knife

- to have surgery

My father will go under the knife on Monday.

go up

- to increase

The price for gasoline has just gone up.

go up

- to be constructed

Many new buildings are going up in our city.

go up in flames/smoke

- to burn or be destroyed by fire, to fail, to not come true (dreams)

The waiter's plans to open a new restaurant went up in smoke after he lost his job.

go up to (someone or something)

- to approach someone or something

The boy was too shy to go up to the man to ask him a question.

go whole hog

- to do everything possible

We plan to go whole hog to make the party successful.

go with (something)

- to go well with something, to match something

My green shirt does not go with my red hat.

go with (something)

- to choose one thing rather than another

We decided to go with the small rental car rather than the big one.

go with the flow

- to proceed in an easy manner to do what others are doing

I usually go with the flow and never disagree with my friends.

go without (something)

- to manage to survive or do well without something

We had to go without water for two days in our apartment.

go without saying

- to be so easy to understand that it does not have to be mentioned

The man is a hard worker so it goes without saying that his boss is very happy with him.

go wrong

- to fail

Things began to go wrong soon after our camping trip began.

goes to show

- something serves to prove a point

The man's success goes to show that hard work will lead to success.

(have something) going for you

- to be or have something as an advantage

The woman should do very well as she has many things going for her.

going rate

- the current rate

The going rate for carpenters is very high and it will cost much money to build the house.

gold mine of information

- someone or something that is full of information

The woman is a gold mine of information and she is very valuable to her company.

golden opportunity

- an excellent and rare opportunity

The hot weather was a golden opportunity for the ice cream seller to make money.

golf widow

- a wife who is left alone much of the time because her husband is playing golf

The woman is a golf widow. Her husband is always playing golf.

gone but not forgotten

- to be gone or dead but still remembered

Our grandfather is gone but not forgotten.

gone to meet one's maker

- to be dead

The car accident was terrible and the driver has gone to meet his maker.

gone with the wind

- to be gone

The woman is gone with the wind and we will probably never see her again.

good deal

- a product of good quality and a cheap price

You can usually get a good deal on stereos at that discount store.

a good deal of (something)

- much of something, a lot of something

We have a good deal of paint remaining after painting the room.

good-for-nothing

- to be worthless

The man is a good-for-nothing and lazy worker.

Good grief!

- used to show surprise (good or bad)

"Good grief! It's 6:00 and I still have not finished this job."

good old days

- earlier times which everyone remembers as being better than the present

In the good old days people could buy a house easier than today.

good riddance

- used to express happiness when you lose or break something that you do not like or want, used when someone who you don't like leaves

I said good riddance when my old computer stopped working and I had to buy a new one.

good riddance to bad rubbish

- used to show that you are happy that someone or something has been taken or sent away

"Good riddance to bad rubbish! I don't like him and I am glad that he is gone."

good sport

- a person who loses a competition or game without complaining

My friend is a good sport and he never complains about losing.

goof off

- to waste time, to fool around, to not work or be serious

The boy has been goofing off all afternoon and has not done any work.

goof up

- to make a mistake, to perform badly

The boy goofed up during his performance.

(one's) goose is cooked

- one has been discovered to have done something wrong and is now in trouble, one is finished, one's chances are ruined

I told a lie to my company. Now my goose is cooked and I am in much trouble.

gospel truth

- the undeniable truth

The man told the gospel truth during the trial.

got a thing going (with someone)

- engaged in an activity with someone (in romance or business)

The man has got a thing going with his neighbor.

grab a bite (to eat)

- to get something to eat

We stopped at a small restaurant to grab a bite to eat.

grace (someone or something) with one's presence

- to honor someone or something by being present

The Queen graced the opening of the hospital with her presence.

grain of truth

- the smallest amount of truth

There was not a grain of truth in what the man said.

grand slam home run

- a home run in baseball when there are three players on the bases (the bases are loaded) and therefore four runs are scored

My favorite player got a grand slam home run last night.

grasp at straws

- to try something with little hope of success

The man is grasping at straws with his weak excuse for his bad behavior.

grass is always greener on the other side (of the fence)

- a place or situation that is far away or different seems better than one's present situation

My cousin is always changing jobs because she thinks that the grass is always greener on the other side.

grate on (someone's) nerves

- to annoy or bother someone

The woman's singing is beginning to grate on my nerves.

gravy train

- a job that gives one much money compared with what you do

The cleaning contract was a gravy train. We worked for three hours but we got paid for eight hours.

gray area

- something difficult to define or put into a particular category, something that is not clear

Some of the legal issues were in a gray area.

grease (someone's) palm

- to pay money to someone for some special favor

We had to grease the border guard's palm in order to enter the country.

greasy spoon

- a small and cheap eating place with basic but not great food

We went to a greasy spoon for breakfast because the other restaurants were closed.

a great deal of (something)

- much or a lot of something

There was a great deal of water in our house after the flood.

greatest thing since sliced bread

- the best thing that there ever was

The new digital camera is the greatest thing since sliced bread.

green

- to be inexperienced or immature

The new employee is green and does not know his job very well.

green around the gills

- to look sick

My colleague was looking a little green around the gills when he came to work today.

a green thumb

- the skill to make plants grow

The man has a green thumb and has a very beautiful garden.

green with envy

- to be very jealous, to be full of envy

The little girl was green with envy when she saw her friend's new bicycle.

grin and bear it

- to endure something unpleasant with good humor

I have to grin and bear it when my supervisor becomes angry with me.

grin like a Cheshire cat

- to grin or smile broadly

The little boy was grinning like a Cheshire cat when he entered the room.

grind to a halt

- to slow down and stop (like a machine when it is turned off)

The city ground to a halt when the electric power was off.

grist for the mill

- something that can be used for one's advantage

The information was grist for the mill of the salesman.

grit one's teeth

- to grind one's teeth together in anger or determination or reluctance

I grit my teeth and phoned my father to ask if I could borrow some money.

gross out (someone) or gross (someone) out

- to make someone sick or disgusted

The movie was very violent and grossed out my sister.

ground floor

- the first or best chance (especially in a business)

The video store was a good investment and I was happy to get in on the ground floor.

ground (someone)

- to take away someone's privileges (usually used for teenagers)

The girl was grounded by her parents because she came home late too often.

grounds for (something)

- the basis or reason for legal action or a complaint

The fact that the man stole the money was grounds for his dismissal from the company.

grow on (someone)

- to become acceptable to someone or liked by someone

At first, I did not like the strange music but now it is beginning to grow on me.

grow out of (something)

- to abandon something as one matures or becomes older

The little boy is beginning to grow out of his baby chair.

grow to do/like (something)

- to gradually begin to do something or like someone or something

I am growing to like the people who live next door to me.

The girl is growing to do her homework much better than before.

grunt work

- hard and thankless work

I am often forced to do the grunt work at my company.

guard against (someone or something)

- to take care to avoid someone or something

When we go to the beach we must guard against the hot sun.

guest of honor

- the special person for whom a party or ceremony is held

My father was the guest of honor at the company banquet.

gulp for air

- to desperately try to get some air or a breath

The man began gulping for air after he fell into the lake.

gum up

- to cause something not to work, to make something go wrong

The computer printer became gummed up as I was trying to print my resume.

gun for (someone)

- to look hard for a chance to harm or defeat someone

My supervisor has been gunning for me for a long time and I do not know why.

gun for (something)

- to try very hard to get a prize or promotion etc.

I have been gunning for the sales job for a long time.

gung-ho

- to be enthusiastic, to be full of eagerness

My friend is gung-ho about her new job at the library.

gut feeling/reaction

- a personal or intuitive feeling or response

I had a gut feeling that my friend would not get the job that he wanted.

gyp (someone) out of (something)

- to cheat someone

The woman at the store gypped the man out of some money.

H

had best (do something)

- should do something, ought to do something

I had best go home soon as I want to get up early tomorrow morning.

had better (do something)

- should do something, ought to do something

I had better go now or I will be late for class.

hail from (somewhere)

- to originally come from somewhere

My father hails from a small farming community.

the hair of the dog that bit you

- a drink of alcohol taken when one is recovering from drinking too much

My friend started the day with the hair of the dog that bit him.

(one's) hair stands on end

- to be frightened or afraid of something

My hair stood on end when I saw the scene of the automobile accident.

hale and hearty

- to be in very good health, to be well and strong

My uncle is hale and hearty and he never gets sick.

half-baked

- an idea or plan that is not thought about carefully or not studied carefully

I do not really like my friend's half-baked ideas.

halfhearted

- not enthusiastic, not interested

The woman made a halfhearted attempt to find a new job.

half the battle

- a large part of the work

Writing the letters will be half the battle. We can finish the rest of the work later.

halfhearted about (someone or something)

- to be unenthusiastic about someone or something

I was halfhearted about joining the hiking group.

ham it up

- to do something silly or try to exaggerate something in a funny way

I was hamming it up with my friend in front of the principal's office.

hammer away at (someone or something)

- to be persistent in trying to do something

I will hammer away at my final essay for university this weekend.

hammer out a deal or hammer a deal out

- to make a deal or agreement by discussion and debate

We worked hard to hammer out a deal with our company about our holiday schedule.

hammer out (something) or hammer (something) out

- to make an agreement or plan by discussion and debate

The union and managers were able to hammer out an agreement before midnight last night.

hammer (something) home or hammer home (something)

- to try hard to make someone understand something

The speaker tried to hammer home the importance of treating the customers with respect.

hand Idioms

hand down a decision

- to announce a legal decision

The judge handed down his decision early in the afternoon.

hand down (something) or hand (something) down

- to arrange to give something to someone after your death

My grandmother handed down her silver jewellery to my mother.

hand in glove with (someone)

- very close with someone

The supervisor and manager work hand in glove to create a positive atmosphere in the company.

hand in hand

- holding hands, working together as a team

I walked to the movie hand in hand with my girlfriend.

We worked hand in hand to finish the project.

hand in (something) or hand (something) in

- to give something to someone, to hand something to someone

I went to the company early to hand in my job application.

hand it to (someone)

- to give credit or praise to someone

You have to hand it to our manager for working hard and being successful with his business.

a hand-me-down

- something given away after another person does not need it (especially clothes)

The girl was very poor when she was a child and always wore hand-me-down clothes.

a hand-out

- a gift (usually from the government)

The government recently stopped giving hand-outs to the downtown businesses.

a hand-out

- a sheet of paper given to students in a class or to people who attend a meeting or lecture

Everyone at the meeting was given a hand-out on how to invest money.

hand out (something) or hand (something) out

- to distribute something, to give something of the same kind to several people

The teacher did not hand out the tests until everybody in the class stopped talking.

hand over fist

- quickly

Our new company is making money hand over fist.

hand over (someone or something) to (someone)

- to give control or possession of something to someone, to give something to another person

The criminals were forced to hand over the stolen money to the police.

hand (something) down to (someone) or hand down (something) to (someone)

- to give something to a younger person

The girl always handed her old clothes down to her younger sister.

hand (something) to (someone) on a silver platter

- to give a person something that has not been earned

The father handed a job to his son on a silver platter and the boy never made any effort at all.

hand-to-hand combat

- fighting with one's hands without weapons

The two soldiers were doing hand-to-hand combat.

hand-to-mouth

- only enough money for basic living

The man was living a hand-to-mouth existence until he was able to find a job.

(one's) hands are tied

- one is unable to help

My hands were tied and I could not help my friend.

hands down

- easy, unopposed

Our team won the game hands down over the other team.

hands off

- left alone, without interfering

The government decided to take a hands-off approach with the teachers during the strike.

handle (someone) with kid gloves

- to handle someone very gently and carefully because you do not want to upset him or her

You must handle the new employee with kid gloves because he is very sensitive.

the handwriting is on the wall

- something bad or significant will happen

The handwriting is on the wall. Business conditions are bad so nobody will get a bonus this year.

handy

- can easily fix things

The man is very handy around the house and is always fixing or building something.

hang Idioms

hang a left

- to turn to the left

We must hang a left at the end of the block.

hang a right

- to turn to the right

We decided to hang a right when we came to the main street.

hang around

- to pass time or stay someplace without any real purpose or aim

I spent the weekend hanging around with my friends.

hang back

- to stay some distance behind someone or away from someone, to hesitate or be unwilling to do something

The man always hangs back when his boss asks for volunteers.

hang by a thread/hair

- to be in doubt, to depend on a very small thing

The outcome of the election was hanging by a thread until late at night.

hang in the balance

- to have two equally possible results, to be uncertain

Building the new school hangs in the balance after the recent election.

hang in (there)

- to persevere, to not give up

"You should hang in there and not quit your job even if you hate the supervisor."

Hang it!

- a rather old expression used to express annoyance or disappointment

"Hang it," the man said when he hit his finger with the hammer.

hang loose

- to relax, to remain calm

I want to stay home this weekend and hang loose.

hang on

- to continue

Although conditions were very bad the man decided to hang on and fight to keep his business going.

hang on

- to wait, to continue listening on the telephone

"Hang on for a minute while I go and get a pen."

hang on (someone's) coattails

- to have one's fortune or success depend on another person

The man is hanging on the coattails of his successful boss.

hang on (someone's) every word or hang on every word of (someone)

- to listen with complete attention to everything someone says

The audience hung on every word of the speaker.

hang on to (something)

- to hold something tightly, to keep something firmly

"Please hang on to your hat or the wind will blow it off."

hang one on

- to get drunk

The man hung one on last night after he heard about his promotion.

hang one's hat (somewhere)

- to live or take up residence somewhere

I want to move and hang my hat in a small town somewhere.

hang out one's shingle

- to notify the public of the opening of an office - especially an office of a doctor or lawyer or other professional

The man will hang out his shingle now that he has graduated from law school.

hang out (somewhere)

- to spend one's time with no great purpose, to spend leisure time with friends

The boys like to hang out at the shopping center on Saturdays.

hang out with (someone)

- to spend time with someone with no great purpose, to spend leisure time with friends

Recently, my friend has been hanging out with a group of people who are a bad influence on him.

hang (someone) in effigy

- to hang a dummy of a hated person

The demonstrators hung the dishonest politician in effigy.

hang tough

- to stick to one's position

I decided to hang tough and stop negotiating with the lawyer.

hang up one's hat

- to leave a job (usually after a long career)

The man decided to hang up his hat after forty years at his job.

hang up (something) or hang (something) up

- to place something on a hook or peg or hangar

Everyone was asked to hang up their jackets before they entered the room.

hang up (the telephone)

- to place a telephone receiver back on the telephone and end the call

I hung up the telephone and left home to go to work.

a hang-up

- a delay in some process

There was a hang-up in the construction of the office tower because of the fire.

a hang-up

- an inhibition, a neurotic reaction to some life situation

The girl has a serious hang-up about the dark and is afraid to go out at night.

happen upon (someone or something)

- to meet someone or find something unexpectedly

I happened upon a very valuable book when I was cleaning up my grandfather's house.

happy hour

- a time in bars or restaurants when drinks are served at a discount

We stopped at a restaurant during happy hour and had a drink.

hard Idioms

a hard-and-fast rule

- a rule that cannot be altered to fit special cases

There is no hard-and-fast rule that says you cannot use a cell phone on the bus.

as hard as nails

- physically very fit and strong, rough

The man is as hard as nails and is not a good person to have an argument with.

hard facts

- specific facts which can be proved

We tried hard to learn the hard facts about the new product.

hard feelings

- angry or bitter feelings

I do not have any hard feelings toward my boss even though he fired me.

hard-nosed

- not weak or soft, stubborn - especially in a fight or contest or negotiations

The company had a hard-nosed attitude while bargaining with the union.

a hard nut to crack

- a person or thing not easily understood or influenced

Our boss is a hard nut to crack and he is not close to many people.

hard of hearing

- unable to hear well

The man is hard of hearing so you must speak loudly when you talk to him.

hard on (someone or something)

- to treat someone or something roughly

The boy is very hard on shoes.

hard on (someone's) heels

- to be following someone very closely

The police officer was hard on the heels of the criminal.

hard-pressed

- burdened with urgent business

"I am hard-pressed for time. Can we meet later?"

a hard sell

- an attitude where you pressure someone to buy something

The car dealer gave me a hard sell on the car so I went to another dealer.

hard to call

- to be hard to determine

The election was hard to call until the last moment.

hard up

- to be short of money

I am hard up for money and I cannot go to the movie.

harken back to (something)

- to have started out as something

The new building harkens back to a style that appeared over 100 years ago.

harp on (something)

- to talk repeatedly and tediously about something

My friend has been harping on his lack of money for several weeks now.

hash (something) over or hash over (something)

- to discuss something in great detail

The teachers stayed after school to hash over the new class schedule.

a hassle

- a bothersome thing

It is a hassle to have to report to my boss two times a day.

a hatchet man

- a politician whose job it is to say negative things about the opposition, a person in a company who must fire extra workers or cut other expenses

The manager is acting as a hatchet man for the company president.

hate (someone's) guts

- to feel a very strong dislike for someone

I hate my neighbors guts after she caused me many problems.

haul (someone) in or haul in (someone)

- to take someone to the police station, to arrest someone

The police hauled the man in because he was drinking while driving.

have Idioms

have a ball

- to have a good time

My friend had a ball at the party last night.

have a bee in one's bonnet

- to have an idea or thought that stays in one's mind

My sister has a bee in her bonnet about going to Mexico to live.

have a big mouth

- to be a person who gossips or tells secrets

My friend has a big mouth so I do not like to tell him any secrets.

have a blowout

- to have a big wild party or sale

The university students had a blowout on their graduation day.

have a blowout

- to have a burst tire on a car or truck

Our car had a blowout on the road to the mountain.

have a bone to pick with (someone)

- to have a disagreement or problem that you want to discuss with someone

I have a bone to pick with my boss because of his criticism of me.

have a brush with (something)

- to have a brief experience with something (law, death etc.)

I had a brush with the law when my car was stopped for speeding.

have a card up one's sleeve

- to have a reserve plan or a secret advantage

The man had a card up his sleeve when he went to the bank to ask for more money for his business.

have a case (against someone)

- to have much evidence that can be used against someone

The police have a case against the man who is selling the stolen cars.

have a change of heart

- to change one's attitude or decision (usually from negative to positive)

I had a change of heart and will let my friend use my car tomorrow.

have a chip on one's shoulder

- to seem to want to start a conflict or quarrel

Our neighbor has a chip on his shoulder and is always trying to start a fight.

have a clear conscience

- to be free of guilt

I have a clear conscience and I am not worried that I did anything wrong.

have a close call/shave

- to almost be involved in an accident or incident (but the accident or incident does not happen)

I had a close call this morning when I was almost hit by a car.

(not) have a clue (about something)

- (not) know anything about something

I do not have a clue who took my laptop computer.

have a crack at (something)

- to try something, to take a turn at trying to do something

The problem is very difficult but I will take a crack at solving it tomorrow.

have a crush on (someone)

- to have strong feelings of love for someone

The girl has a crush on someone from her university.

have a familiar ring

- to sound familiar

The complaints of our supervisor have a familiar ring and we have heard them before.

have a feeling about (something)

- to have an intuition about something

I have a feeling about the new man in our company that is not good.

have a field day

- to have a chance to do much of something that you want - especially the chance to criticize someone

The media had a field day with the scandal in the city government.

have a finger in the pie

- to be involved in something

The man has his finger in the pie of many businesses.

have a fit

- to become upset

The woman had a fit when she saw what her son had done to her car.

have a foot in both camps

- to support each of two opposing groups of people

The mayor of the city has a foot in both camps of the opposition parties.

have a frog in one's throat

- to have a feeling of a hoarse throat, to be unable to speak

I had a frog in my throat and could not speak easily in front of the class.

have a go at (something)

- to try to do something

I decided to have a go at applying for the job after my boss told me about it.

have a good command of (something)

- to know something well

The girls have a good command of French.

have a good head on one's shoulders

- to be smart or sensible

The new salesman has a good head on his shoulders.

have a good mind to (do something)

- to be tempted to do something

I have a good mind to tell my friend that I will not lend him any money.

have a good thing going

- to be involved in something that is successful and gives you benefits

I have a good thing going with my company and my schedule is very good.

have a good time

- to enjoy oneself

I had a good time at the party.

have a green thumb

- to be able to grow plants well

My sister has a green thumb and has a beautiful garden.

have a hand in (something)

- to be partly responsible for something

I think that the woman had a hand in getting her friend fired from her job.

have a handle on (something)

- to have control or an understanding of something

I finally have a handle on my work and it is going very well.

have a head for (something)

- to have the mental capacity for something

My father has a head for numbers and is very good at mathematics.

have a heart

- to be generous and forgiving

The woman does not have a heart and nobody likes her.

have a heart of gold

- to be generous or sincere or friendly

The woman has a heart of gold and is always willing to help her friends.

have a heart of stone

- to be cold and unfriendly

The man has a heart of stone and he will never help anybody.

have a heart-to-heart talk (with someone)

- to have a sincere and intimate talk with someone

I had a heart-to-heart talk with my sister about my girlfriend.

have a hold on (someone)

- to have a strong and secure influence on someone

The coach has a hold on the members of the team.

have a hunch about (something)

- to have a feeling that something will or should happen

I have a hunch that my friend will not come to meet me.

have a keen interest in (someone or something)

- to be very interested in someone or something

I have always had a keen interest in hiking and camping.

have a lot going (for one)

- to have many things working to one's benefit

The woman has a lot going for her and should do well at her job.

have a lot of promise

- to have a good future ahead

The young race horse has a lot of promise and should be a winner in the future.

have a lot on one's mind

- to have many things to worry about

The young woman has a lot on her mind with her new job and her new boyfriend.

have a lot on one's plate

- to have many things to do or deal with, to be busy with many different activities

The young woman has a lot on her plate at the moment and is very busy.

have a mind like a steel trap

- to have a very sharp and agile mind

The man has a mind like a steel trap and can remember most things easily.

have a near miss

- to nearly crash or collide with something

The two trucks had a near miss on the highway this morning.

have a nose for (something)

- to have a talent for finding something

Our supervisor has a nose for finding ways to save money in our company.

have a notion to (do something)

- to feel tempted or inclined to do something

I had a notion to go to the beach so I went to the beach.

have a one-track mind

- to think only about one thing

My friend has a one-track mind and he is only interested in making money.

have a passion for (something)

- to have a strong feeling of need or love for something

The student wants to become a teacher because he has a passion for teaching children.

have a pick-me-up

- to eat or drink something stimulating

The carpenter bought a protein drink as a pick-me-up in the middle of the afternoon.

have a price on one's head

- to be wanted by the police who will pay money for one's capture

The man has a price on his head and is wanted by the police all over the country.

have a rough time (of it)

- to experience a difficult period

My friend had a rough time of it when he was forced to leave his job.

have a run-in with (someone)

- to have an unpleasant encounter with someone

I had a run-in with my boss that made us both feel bad.

have a run of bad luck

- to have a period of bad luck

My uncle had a run of bad luck and he lost his business as well as his house.

have a say in (something)

- to have a part or role in making a decision

The union wanted to have a say in how the company was managed.

have a score to settle with (someone)

- to have a problem to solve with someone

I have a score to settle with the soccer coach which I want to talk about.

have a scrape with (someone or something)

- to come into contact with someone or something

I had a scrape with my coworker and I must be very careful of what I say now.

have a screw loose

- to act in a strange way, to be foolish, to be crazy

The man is very strange. I think that he has a screw loose somewhere.

(not) have a snowball's chance in hell

- to have no chance at all

Our team did not have a snowball's chance in hell to win the tournament.

have a soft spot in one's heart for (someone or something)

- to be fond of someone or something

My grandmother has a soft spot in her heart for her youngest son.

have a sweet tooth

- to have a desire to eat sweet foods

The girl has a sweet tooth and loves to eat chocolate.

have a taste for (something)

- to have a desire for a particular food or drink or experience

Recently, my friend has a taste for very loud music.

have a thing going with (someone)

- to have a romantic relationship with someone

I think that the secretary has a thing going with one of the salesmen.

have a tiger by the tail

- to have a task or situation that you are not prepared for or which is a bigger challenge that you expected

The politician had a tiger by the tail as he tried to manage the large problem.

have a time

- to have trouble, to have a hard time

My friend really had a time last night when her car stopped working.

have a time

- to have a good time, to have fun

We really had a time at the party last night.

have a try at (something)

- to try something, to take a turn at trying to do something

I want to have a try at scuba diving.

have a vested interest in (something)

- to have a personal interest (often financial) in something

The mayor of the city has a vested interest in building the new stadium.

have a voice in (something)

- to have a part or role in making a decision

The citizens were angry because they had no voice in the government policy changes.

have a way with (someone or something)

- to be able to lead or persuade or influence others

The little girl has a way with horses. They are very gentle when she is around.

have a weakness for (someone or something)

- to be unable to resist someone or something

The girl has a weakness for chocolate and is always eating it.

have a whale of a time

- to have a very exciting time

Everybody had a whale of a time at the school picnic.

have a word with (someone)

- to talk briefly with someone

I will have a word with my boss before he goes home tonight.

have an accident

- to experience something that was not intended

I had an accident on my way to work this morning.

have an ace up one's sleeve

- to have something that you can use to gain an advantage (in a card game the ace is often the most valuable card and a cheater could have an ace up his or her sleeve to use against an opponent)

I have an ace up my sleeve which should help me when I meet my boss tomorrow.

have an ax to grind (with someone)

- to have something to complain about

My coworker has an ax to grind with our boss and he is always complaining.

have an ear for (something)

- to have the ability to learn music or languages

My cousin has an ear for music and is a very good musician.

have an edge on/over (someone or something)

- to have an advantage over someone or something

Our team has an edge over the other teams to win the high school football championship.

The boy has an edge on the others to win the spelling contest.

have an eye for (something)

- to have good taste in something, to be able to judge something correctly

The girl has an eye for nice furniture and her apartment is absolutely beautiful.

have an in with (someone)

- to have a way to request a special favor from someone

The woman has an in with her boss and can easily get time off.

have an itch to (do something)

- to have a desire to do something

I have an itch to go fishing this summer.

have an open mind

- to be mentally flexible

Our boss has an open mind and is happy to hear new ideas.

have an out

- to have an excuse

The teacher asked me to do my presentation tomorrow but I have an out and do not have to do it. I will go to the doctor tomorrow

(not) have anything to do with someone

- to (not) want to be a friend or work with or do business with someone

My father will not have anything to do with the salesman after the salesman sold him the faulty car.

have arrived

- to reach a position of power or authority or prominence

The manager thought that she had arrived when she was given a beautiful corner office.

have bearing on (something)

- to affect or influence something

The decision will have much bearing on the way that the company is managed.

have been around

- to have been to many places and done many things, to be experienced

My brother has been around and has been overseas many times.

have been had

- to have been cheated or dealt with badly

I felt that I had been had when the salesman sold me the bad product.

have been through the mill

- to have become exhausted or badly treated

The students have been through the mill and want to relax after the final exams.

have been to hell and back

- to have survived a great deal of trouble

I thought that I had been to hell and back after I lost my job and could not find a new one.

have clean hands

- to be guiltless

I had clean hands and I did not need to worry about the company scandal.

have come a long way

- to have accomplished much

The woman has come a long way since she lost her house and her apartment.

have contact with (someone)

- to communicate with someone

The government has had no contact with the kidnappers for several weeks.

have designs on (someone or something)

- to have plans for someone or something

The city has designs on the land that the railway used to occupy.

have dibs on (something)

- to demand a share of something, to be in line to use something

I have dibs on the computer and would like to use it as soon as possible.

have egg on one's face

- to be embarrassed

The man has egg on his face after discovering his mistake.

have elbow room

- to have enough space

We have lots of elbow room in our new house.

have eyes bigger than one's stomach

- to have a desire for more food than one can eat

I had eyes bigger than my stomach when I took too much food at the buffet.

have eyes in the back of one's head

- to be able to sense what is going on where you cannot see

The man has eyes in the back of his head and knows everything that is going on.

have eyes only for (someone or something)

- to give all of one's attention to someone or something, to be interested only in someone or something

The girl has eyes only for her boyfriend.

have feet of clay

- to have a character defect

The candidate has feet of clay and is being criticized by her opponents.

have foot-in-mouth disease

- to embarrass oneself through a silly mistake

The man has foot-in-mouth disease and is always saying stupid things.

have good contacts

- to know people who can help you get a job or do some kind of business

The salesman has good contacts and always sells many products.

have got (something)

- to have something, to possess something

My friend has got a new car.

I have got a cold.

have got to

- must

I have got to go to see my parents this evening.

have growing pains

- to have difficulties in the growth of a child or organization etc.

The new company is having growing pains as it tries to meet the big demand for its services.

have had enough

- to have had as much as you need of something

I have had enough sun today so I will go home soon.

have had it up to here with (someone or something)

- to have reached the end of one's endurance or tolerance of someone or something

The teacher has had it up to here with the bad behavior of the students.

have had it with (someone or something)

- to be unable to tolerate someone or something anymore

I have had it with the girl's constant complaining.

have had its day

- to be no longer useful or successful

My suitcase has had its day and I must buy a new one.

have half a mind to (do something)

- to feel tempted or inclined to do something

I have half a mind to go and offer my resignation to the company president.

have in mind

- to intend, to plan

"What do you have in mind for your wife's birthday?"

have it

- to hear or get news, to understand

I have it that the new company president will be coming to see us next week.

have it

- to claim, to say

Rumor has it that three of the supervisors will be leaving next week.

have it

- to allow (usually used with will or would)

We want to have a party at our office next month but our boss will not have it.

have it

- to get or find the answer, to understand

I think that I finally have it. The reason the woman is leaving is because she is going to have a baby.

have it all over (someone or something)

- to be much better than someone or something

My new bicycle has it all over my old one.

have it both ways

- to do two things, to have two things

"You can't have it both ways. You must choose one or the other."

have it coming (to someone)

- to deserve punishment

The man has it coming after causing many problems in his company.

have it in for (someone)

- to show ill will to someone, to dislike someone

I have been having problems at work recently. I think that the new supervisor has it in for me.

have it made

- to be successful, to have everything

My friend has it made with his new job.

have it out with (someone)

- to argue or fight with someone

I had it out with my friend yesterday over the problem with the money.

have jet lag

- to be tired because you have travelled a long distance in an airplane and have crossed many time zones so your body cannot adjust

I had jet lag for several days after my long trip.

have mixed feelings about (someone or something)

- to be uncertain about someone or something

I have mixed feelings about taking the new job.

have money to burn

- to have lots of money

The man has money to burn and is always buying something new.

have never had it so good

- to have never been in such a good situation

We have never had it so good since the new supervisor came to our department.

have no business (doing something)

- to be wrong to do something

The manager has no business asking us about our private business.

have none of (something)

- to not tolerate or endure something

Our teacher will have none of our talking loudly in the class.

have nothing on (someone or something)

- to have no information or evidence about someone or something

The police have nothing on the man so they cannot arrest him.

have nothing to do with (someone or something)

- to not be involved with someone or something

My aunt will have nothing to do with the other members of her family.

have nothing/none to spare

- to not have extra of something

We have none to spare so we are unable to give any books to the hospital.

have on (something) or have (something) on

- to be wearing something

"What did the woman have on when you saw her?"

have one foot in the grave

- to be near death (usually because of old age or illness)

My uncle is very sick and has one foot in the grave.

have one for the road

- to have a drink before leaving

We decided to have one for the road before we walked to the train station to go home.

have one's ass in a sling

- to be in an uncomfortable predicament, to be at a disadvantage

The man has his ass in a sling now that he has quit his job and cannot find another one.

have one's back against/to the wall

- to be in a defensive or difficult position

The boy has his back to the wall and must pass his exams or leave school.

have one's cake and eat it too

- to have something both ways

The union wants to have their cake and eat it too and will not give up anything during the bad economic times.

have one's druthers

- to get one's choice

If I had my druthers, I would not go to the meeting this evening.

have one's ear to the ground

- to listen carefully for advice or advance warning of something

Our teacher always has his ear to the ground to look for possible trouble at school.

have one's eye on (something)

- to have a wish or aim for something, to look or think about something

I want to buy a present for my girlfriend and I have my eye on a dress that I saw at the department store last week.

have one's feet on the ground

- to be practical or sensible

The new sales manager has his feet on the ground and is a very good manager.

have one's finger in too many pies

- to be involved in too many things

The woman has her finger in too many pies and is unable to do her work well.

have one's hand in the till

- to be stealing money from a company or organization

The man had his hand in the till for many years before he was caught.

have one's hands full with (someone or something)

- to be totally occupied with someone or something

The mother has her hands full with the two young children.

have one's hands tied

- to be prevented from doing something

I had my hands tied and was unable to help my friend.

have one's head in the clouds

- to be unaware of what is going on

The boy has his head in the clouds and does not think about what is going on around him.

have one's heart go out to (someone)

- to have compassion for someone

We had our heart go out to the woman who lost her child in the fire.

have one's heart in the right place

- to have good intentions (even if the results may be bad)

The woman has her heart in the right place and is always ready to help if she can.

have one's heart set against (something)

- to be totally against something

My father has his heart set against my trip to Europe.

have one's heart set on (something)

- to want something very much

The child has his heart set on getting a new bicycle for his birthday.

have one's job on the line

- to be facing the possibility of losing one's job

The salesman had his job on the line after his bad sales results.

have one's nose in a book

- to be reading a book

The boy loves reading and always has his nose in a book.

have one's nose in (something)

- to have unwelcome interest in something, to have impolite curiosity about something
The man often has his nose in other people's private business where it does not belong.

have one's nose in the air

- to be conceited or aloof

The girl has her nose in the air and is unfriendly to the other members of her class.

have one's way

- to be able to do what you want or have what you want

The little boy always has his way.

have one's work cut out for one

- to have a large and difficult task to do

We had our work cut out for us when we began to paint the house.

have oneself (something)

- to use or consume something

I decided to have myself a drink before leaving for the movie.

have other fish to fry

- to have other things to do, to have more important things to do

I have other fish to fry and I do not want to get involved with the small problems in my company.

have pull with (someone)

- to have influence with someone

My friend has pull with his boss and often goes home early.

have rocks in one's head

- to be stupid, to not have good judgement

The girl has rocks in her head. She should never have bought that old car.

have second thoughts about (someone or something)

- to have doubts about someone or something

Recently, I am having second thoughts about buying a new motorcycle.

have seen better days

- to be worn out or well-used

My bicycle has seen better days and soon I will need to buy a new one.

have (someone) in one's pocket

- to have control over someone

The large union has the city mayor in their pocket.

have (someone or something) in tow

- to lead or pull or tow someone or something

The boy had his brother in tow as he walked down the street.

have (someone) over

- to invite someone to your house

We plan to have my parents over when we settle into our new house.

have (someone) over a barrel

- to have someone in a helpless or trapped position

We have the other company over a barrel and we should be able to win the contract easily.

have (someone's) blood on one's hands

- to be responsible for someone's death

The army general has the citizen's blood on his hands.

have (someone's) hide

- to scold or punish someone

The mother promised to have her son's hide if he did not behave.

have (something) against (someone or something)

- to dislike someone or something

I do not know why but my teacher seems to have something against me.

have (something) at one's fingertips

- to have something within reach

I did not have a pen at my fingertips so I could not write down the address.

have (something) coming to (someone)

- to deserve punishment for something

The girl has the punishment coming to her because of what she did.

have (something) down pat

- to have learned or memorized something perfectly

I have the dance routine down pat.

have (something) going for one

- to have ability or talent or good looks

The woman has a lot going for her and I am sure that she will get the new job.

have (something) hanging over one's head

- to have something worrying one

I want to finish my final essay so that I do not have it hanging over my head.

have (something) in common with (someone or something)

- to resemble someone else in specific ways, to have similar interests to someone

I have much in common with a girl in my class.

have (something) in mind

- to be thinking about something, to be considering something, to have a plan or idea in one's mind

I do not know what my friend has in mind so I will ask him later.

have (something) in stock

- to have goods available to sell

The store does not have any DVD players in stock.

have (something) in store for (someone)

- to have something planned for someone

I do not know what my boss has in store for me.

have (something) on

- to have plans for a particular time

I have something on this afternoon so I cannot go to the park.

have (something) on file

- to have or keep a written record of something

I have the report on file on my computer.

have (something) on one's mind

- to worry about something, to think constantly about something

The man has several serious problems on his mind.

have (something) on (someone)

- to have information or proof that someone did something wrong

I think that the police have something on the man and that is why he is afraid.

have (something) on the ball

- to be smart or clever or skilled

The woman has a lot on the ball. She should do well in her new job.

have (something) on the brain

- to be obsessed with something

My sister has tennis on the brain and she is always talking about it.

have (something) on the tip of one's tongue

- to be almost able to remember a specific fact such as a name or place

I have the actor's name on the tip of my tongue but I cannot remember it.

have (something) stuck in one's craw

- to have something irritate or displease someone

The man's complaint stuck in my craw for several weeks before I forgot it.

have (something) to do with (something)

- to be about something, to be on the subject of something, to be related to something

"The book has something to do with cooking but I am not sure if you will like it."

That problem has nothing to do with me.

have (something) to spare

- to have more than enough of something

We have extra blankets to spare so we gave some to our neighbors.

have (something) up one's sleeve

- to have something kept secretly ready for a good time to use it

I am not too worried about the meeting as I have something up my sleeve if there are any problems.

have sticky fingers

- to steal things

The waiter was fired from the restaurant because he has sticky fingers.

have the best of both worlds

- to be able to enjoy two different opportunities

The man has the best of both worlds and can enjoy the outdoors and nature while he is working at his job.

have the courage of one's convictions

- to have enough courage and determination to work to achieve one's goals

The man has the courage of his convictions and will only do what he feels is right.

have the devil to pay

- to have a great deal of trouble

I will have the devil to pay if I do not return home early.

have the feel of (something)

- to have learned how something feels, to be accustomed to something

When I had the feel of the airplane, the instructor let me fly it.

have the floor

- to have permission to speak in a meeting

The president had the floor for almost an hour during the meeting.

have the gall to (do something)

- to be arrogant enough to do something

The woman had the gall to ask me to be quiet after she had been talking loudly for an hour.

have the gift of the gab

- to be able to talk and use language easily

My sister has the gift of the gab and can talk to others easily.

have the inside track

- to have an advantage (if you have the inside track while running in a race you have an advantage)

I had the inside track when I applied for the job at the bank.

have the last laugh

- to make someone seem foolish for laughing at you first

I had the last laugh when I went home early while everyone else had to work late.

have the makings of (something)

- to possess the qualities that are needed for something

The new soccer player has the makings of a great star.

have the Midas touch

- to have the ability to make money easily

My uncle has the Midas touch and he can make money easily.

have the presence of mind to (do something)

- to have the calmness and ability to act sensibly in a difficult situation
My aunt had the presence of mind to write a will before she passed away.

have the right to do something

- to have the freedom to do something

The apartment manager does not have the right to tell the tenants when they must leave the building.

have the right-of-way

- to have the right to go before another car or turn before another car turns

The small car had the right-of-way but it was hit by the large truck anyway.

have the time of one's life

- to have a very good time

We had the time of our life at the party last night.

have the wherewithal to (do something)

- to have the money or energy to do something

The man does not have the wherewithal to go to court and fight his case.

have them rolling in the aisles

- to make an audience laugh a lot

The speaker had them rolling in the aisles when he gave his speech.

have time off

- to have free time, to not have to work

I have time off next week so I will meet my friend.

have to (do something)

- to be obliged or forced to do something

I have to leave at 4:00 or I will be late for my appointment.

have to live with (something)

- to have to endure something

Although the house is very cold we will have to live with it.

have too many irons in the fire

- to be doing too many things at once

I have too many irons in the fire at the moment and I am very tired.

have turned the corner

- to have passed a critical point in a process

I think that we have turned the corner and that our business will improve soon.

have two strikes against (one)

- to do two things that are wrong or bad and have only one more thing to do to cause you serious trouble, to be in a difficult situation (from baseball where a batter is finished after three strikes)

The young boy already had two strikes against him when he went to hear the judge's decision about his crime.

have what it takes

- to have the ability or courage to do something

I do not believe that my friend has what it takes to be a good teacher.

haywire

- broken or confused, unrealistic or crazy

The man had a haywire idea to change jobs in his company.

hazard a guess

- to make a guess

I would not want to hazard a guess as to the age of the woman.

hazard an opinion

- to give an opinion

I will not hazard an opinion about the new company policy.

head Idioms

head above water

- out of difficulty, clear of trouble

Although the man works very hard he is not able to keep his head above water financially.

head and shoulders above (someone or something)

- to be clearly superior to someone or something

I believe that our team is head and shoulders above the other teams in the league.

head for (someone/something/somewhere)

- to aim for someone/something/somewhere, to move toward someone/something/somewhere

The tropical storm is heading for the large island.

The dog in the park was heading for the woman.

head hunt

- to search for qualified individuals to fill certain positions

The head-hunting company has phoned me several times about changing jobs.

head off (someone) or head (someone) off

- to get in front of someone and stop him or her, to turn someone back

In the movie the soldiers tried to head off the gang at the mountain pass.

head off (something) or head (something) off

- to stop something, to prevent something

The company was able to head off a strike by the union at the last minute.

head-on

- front end to front end, with the front facing something

There was a serious head-on crash on the highway last night.

head-on

- in a way that is exactly opposite, opposed to someone in an argument or fight

We will deal with our opponents in a head-on manner in order to win the fight.

head out

- to leave, to start

It is time that we head out for the movie or we will be late.

head over heels

- upside down, head first

The boy fell head over heels when his bicycle hit the wall.

head over heels in love (with someone)

- to be completely or deeply in love (with someone)

The girl was head over heels in love with the boy who she met at the party.

a head shrinker

- a psychiatrist

The criminal had to see a head shrinker after the judge sentenced him to life in prison.

a head start

- an early start to something

We left early in order to get a head start on the trip.

head up (something) or head (something) up

- to be at the head of a group, to be a leader of something

The company president headed up a group of people going overseas to promote trade.

heads or tails

- the face of a coin or the opposite side of the coin

We decided who would go first in the game by throwing heads or tails with a coin.

heads will roll

- somebody will get into severe trouble

Heads will roll because of the problems with the new employee.

hear a peep out of (someone)

- to hear the smallest sound from someone

We did not hear a peep out of the children who were playing in the other room.

hear from (someone)

- to receive a letter or phone call or news from someone

I have not heard from my university roommate for over one year.

hear of (someone or something)

- to know about someone or something, to be familiar with someone or something

I have never heard of the singer.

(not) hear of (something)

- to not tolerate or permit something

I will not hear of my aunt staying in a hotel when she visits us.

hear (someone) out or hear out (someone)

- to listen to everything that someone has to say

We went to the meeting to hear the manager out about the new building.

hear (something) through the grapevine

- to hear a rumor that has been passed on from one person to another person

I heard it through the grapevine that our company will get a new president.

heart Idioms**heart and soul**

- all of one's energy, all of one's efforts

My friend is putting his heart and soul into his new job.

heart goes out to (someone)

- one feels sympathy for someone

My heart goes out to the victims of the railway accident.

heart is in the right place

- kindhearted or sympathetic, having good intentions

The man sometimes makes mistakes but his heart is in the right place.

heart is set on (something)

- one desires and expects something

The boy's heart is set on getting a dog for his birthday.

heart of gold

- a kind and generous and forgiving personality

My grandmother has a heart of gold and everyone loves her.

heart of stone

- someone with a cold nature with no pity or warmth

The woman has a heart of stone and is not interested in how other people feel.

heart skips/misses a beat

- startled or excited from surprise or joy or fright

My heart skipped a beat when the truck almost hit us last night.

heart stands still

- frightened or worried

My heart stood still when I heard the story about the little boy and the fire.

heart-to-heart

- honest or intimate

The couple had a heart-to-heart talk before they decided to get married.

heavy going

- difficult to do

Moving the furniture was heavy going and we became tired quickly.

a heavy heart

- a feeling of sadness or unhappiness

The man has a heavy heart now that his wife has died.

hedge in (something) or hedge (something) in

- to keep something from getting out or moving freely, to block something in

My car was hedged in by the other cars and I was unable to move it this morning.

hedge one's bets

- to reduce one's loss on something by counterbalancing the loss in some way

We will hedge our bets and go to a movie if the weather is not good enough for a picnic.

hell and high water

- troubles or difficulties of some kind

The relief workers went through hell and high water in order to get the food to the flood victims.

hell-bent for leather

- behaving recklessly, riding a horse recklessly

The boys went hell-bent-for-leather down the path to the beach.

hell on earth

- a very unpleasant situation

The hot weather made the small town like hell on earth.

hell-on-wheels

- a bad-tempered or nagging or crabby person

The woman is hell-on-wheels in the morning so you should be careful of her.

help oneself to (something)

- to take whatever one wants or needs

We went to the buffet table and helped ourselves to the food.

help out with (something)

- to assist someone to do something

I helped out with carrying the luggage of the tour members.

helter-skelter

- in a confusing group, in disorder

When we arrived at work we found the files scattered helter-skelter over the desk.

hem and haw

- to avoid giving a clear answer, to be evasive in speech

The man hemmed and hawed when I asked him if he knew where the missing money was.

hem (someone or something) in or hem in (someone or something)

- to trap or enclose someone or something

We went to the football game but we felt hemmed in by all of the people.

here and now

- immediately

I plan to do the work here and now.

here and there

- in various places, to various places

We went here and there during our holidays.

Here goes.

- ready to do something while hoping for the best results

"Here goes. I am going to go and ask that girl for a date right now."

Here goes nothing.

- ready to do something but think that it will probably be a waste of time and will probably fail

"Here goes nothing. I have already asked the bank to lend me some money and they always says no but I will try again."

here, there and everywhere

- everywhere

The mice were here, there and everywhere in the old house.

hide one's head in the sand

- to refuse to see something, to know something but not want to deal with it

The employee hates to talk about important matters and hides his head in the sand when I try to talk to him.

hide one's face in shame

- to cover one's face because of shame or embarrassment

The man wanted to hide his face in shame after he lost his job.

high Idioms**high and dry**

- stranded, abandoned

They left the manager high and dry when they moved the company headquarters to Europe.

high and low

- everywhere

I looked high and low for my watch but I could not find it.

high-and-mighty

- arrogant

The supervisor always acts high-and-mighty in front of his employees.

(in) high gear

- at top speed, at full activity

The preparations for the wedding have been in high gear all week.

high-handed

- bossy, dictatorial, depending on force rather than what is right

My supervisor always takes a high-handed approach when dealing with the employees.

high life

- a luxurious existence

The couple have been living the high life since they moved to Las Vegas.

high man on the totem pole

- the top person of an organization

My father is the high man on the totem pole in his company and has a very good job.

high on (something)

- intoxicated with a drug, enthusiastic about something

The young man was high on something when the police arrested him.

The woman is high on her diving experience.

high seas

- the ocean (away from the coast)

The crew of the ship spent three months on the high seas before going to shore for a visit.

in high spirits

- to have much energy, to be cheerful

The students are in high spirits since their team won the tournament.

high time

- to be time that something should already have been done

It is high time that we spend some time cleaning up our house.

hightail it out of (somewhere)

- to run away from somewhere, to leave a place quickly

We decided to hightail it out of the restaurant and go home.

highway robbery

- an extremely high price for something

The price that we had to pay for the theater tickets was highway robbery.

hinge on (something)

- to depend on something

Whether or not I can enter the university hinges on my final exam score.

hire out (someone) or hire (someone) out

- to provide one's services for money

The man decided to hire himself out as a model while he was going to school.

hire out (something) or hire (something) out

- to rent something to someone

We hired out our boat last summer because we were too busy to use it.

hit Idioms

hit a home run

- to reach a big goal, to hit a baseball so far that the batter can run around all of the bases and score a run

We hit a home run when we won the big contract.

My favorite baseball player hit a home run last night.

hit a plateau

- to reach a certain level of activity or sales and then stop

The performance of the basketball team hit a plateau and then began to decline.

hit a snag

- to run into a problem

The negotiations to end the teachers' strike hit a snag last night.

hit-and-miss

- unplanned, uncontrolled, aimless, careless

We are looking for a new apartment but it is hit-and-miss whether we can find a good one or not.

hit-and-run

- an accident where the driver of the car that hits someone drives away without stopping

My sister was involved in a hit-and-run accident last Sunday afternoon.

hit-and-run

- striking suddenly and leaving quickly

The army made a hit-and-run attack on the enemy soldiers.

hit bottom

- to be at the very lowest, to not be able to go any lower

The economy hit bottom last year but it is finally starting to improve.

hit close to home

- to affect one personally

The strike by the trash collectors hit close to home when we had no place to put our garbage.

hit home

- to make sense, to make an impression on someone

The amount of damage from the storm hit home when we saw the houses on the beach.

hit it off (with someone)

- to get along well with someone from the first meeting

We really hit it off at the party.

hit on/upon (something)

- to think of something by chance

We hit upon the idea of going to the lake for our holiday after our airline reservations were cancelled.

hit parade

- a list of songs arranged in order of popularity

We listened to all the songs on the hit parade last night.

hit pay dirt

- to discover something of value

The men hit pay dirt when they discovered oil in the farmer's field.

hit (someone) below the belt

- to do something unfair or unsporting to someone

The lawyer was hitting below the belt when he asked the woman many personal questions.

hit (someone) hard

- to affect someone strongly

The death of the woman's father hit her very hard.

hit (someone) like a ton of bricks

- to surprise or shock someone

When the company went out of business it hit everyone like a ton of bricks.

hit (someone) right between the eyes

- to make a strong impression on someone, to surprise someone

The singer's incredible performance really hit me between the eyes.

hit (someone) up for (something)

- to ask someone for something

My friend tried to hit me up for some money but I said no.

hit the books

- to study or prepare for class

I stayed home all weekend and hit the books.

hit the bottle

- to drink alcohol heavily and regularly

The woman started to hit the bottle soon after her divorce.

hit the bricks

- to start walking, to go out into the streets (on strike)

The post office workers hit the bricks and went on strike.

hit the bull's-eye

- to go to the most important part of a matter, to reach the main question

The woman hit the bull's-eye when she talked about the importance of decreasing costs.

hit the ceiling

- to get angry

His wife is going to hit the ceiling when she sees the bill for the car repair.

hit the deck

- to get up from bed, to start working

"Let's hit the deck and get this work done before supper."

hit the dirt

- to fall on the ground and protect oneself under gunfire

We were told to hit the dirt during the bank robbery.

hit the hay

- to go to bed

I decided to hit the hay early last night because I was very tired.

hit the high spots

- to consider or mention only the more important parts of something

Our boss only had time to hit the high spots in his report but still it was very interesting.

hit the jackpot

- to be very lucky or successful

My friend hit the jackpot when she bought a lottery ticket last week.

hit the nail on the head

- to make a correct guess or analysis

The accountant hit the nail on the head when he wrote the report about the bank's problems.

hit the road

- to leave

We should hit the road early tomorrow morning if we want to reach the seashore before evening.

hit the roof

- to become very angry, to go into a rage

The father hit the roof when he discovered that his son had wrecked the family car.

hit the sack

- to go to bed

I am a little tired so I think that I will hit the sack now.

hit the sauce

- to drink alcohol heavily and regularly

My neighbor has been hitting the sauce recently although he says that he does not drink.

hit the skids

- to decline, to decrease in value

The prices of houses hit the skids recently in our city.

hit the spot

- to refresh you or satisfy you

Drinking the lemonade after the baseball game hit the spot.

hitch a ride

- to ask for a ride from a passing motorist by putting your thumb in the air, to get a ride from a passing motorist

We had no gas so I had to hitch a ride to a gas station.

hitch one's wagon to a star

- to aim high, to follow a great ambition or purpose

The man wants to hitch his wagon to a star and pursue his dreams of becoming an actor.

hither and thither

- in one direction and then in another, here and there

The man looked hither and thither when he discovered that he had lost his wallet.

hive of activity

- a place where things are very busy

The school was a hive of activity during the school festival.

Hobson's choice

- the choice between taking what is offered or getting nothing at all (Hobson owned a stable in the 17th century in England and always offered his customers the horse nearest the door)

The customer's were given Hobson's choice. They could buy a car of any color but only if it was black

hold Idioms

hold a candle to (someone or something)

- to be in the same class or level as someone or something (usually used with a negative)

The new restaurant cannot hold a candle to the one that I usually go to.

hold a grudge against (someone)

- to not forgive someone for something, to continue to be angry at someone for something that happened in the past

The employee has been holding a grudge against the company manager for many years.

hold a meeting

- to meet, to have a meeting

The apartment owners decided to hold a meeting last week.

hold all the aces

- to have the best chance of winning, to have full control
I think that I hold all the aces in my dispute with the company.

hold all the trump cards

- to have the best chance of winning, to have full control
It will be difficult to do well in the negotiations with my opponent holding all the trump cards.

hold back

- to stay back or away, to show unwillingness to do something
Our boss always holds back during meetings and never says anything.

hold back (someone) or hold (someone) back

- to prevent someone from doing something
The police officers tried to hold back the angry woman.

hold court

- to act like a king or queen among his or her subjects
Our manager always acts like he is holding court when I see him in his office.

hold down a job

- to have and keep a job
The man has a serious drinking problem and is unable to hold down a job.

hold down (someone or something)

- to keep control of someone or something
The government was able to hold down the rate of inflation for many years.

hold fire

- to stop firing a weapon
The soldiers were told by their captain to hold fire.

hold forth (something)

- to offer something, to propose something
The company held forth a proposal to give the employees a bonus in the summer.

hold forth on/about (something)

- to speak in public, to talk about something
My boss was holding forth about taxes last night when I saw him in his office.

hold good

- to continue, to endure, to last
The demand for air conditioners held good during July but decreased rapidly in August.

hold off (someone) or hold (someone) off

- to keep someone away by force
The man was able to hold off the police for several hours before he was arrested.

hold off (something) or hold (something) off

- to delay something, to not begin something
They will hold off the concert until next week.

hold on

- to wait, to wait and not hang up the phone
I asked my friend to hold on while I looked for my address book.

Hold on!

- Wait a minute, Stop, to wait
"Hold on! I forgot to lock the window."
"Please hold on for a moment while I answer the telephone."

hold on to (someone or something)

- to continue to hold or keep something, to hold someone or something tightly
You should hold on to your bag when you are in the bus or someone may steal it.

hold one's breath

- to stop breathing for a moment when you are excited or nervous

I stopped to hold my breath while I was waiting for the announcement of the winning ticket.

hold one's end of the bargain up

- to do what you have agreed to do

The students did not hold their end of the bargain up when they did not do their homework.

hold one's fire

- to keep back arguments or facts, to keep from telling something

I will hold my fire during today's meeting and wait until next week.

hold one's head up

- to keep one's dignity and pride

The basketball players were able to hold their heads up even though they lost the tournament.

hold one's horses

- to stop and wait patiently

"Hold your horses for a minute while I return to get my wallet."

hold one's own (in an argument)

- to be able to defend one's position in an argument

Although the woman's boss is very aggressive she is able to hold her own in any dispute with him.

hold one's peace

- to be silent and not speak against someone or something

"Please try and hold your peace during the meeting as it will be bad if we have a confrontation."

hold one's tongue

- to keep quiet

The man decided to hold his tongue rather than give his honest opinion.

hold out

- to endure, to persist in one's efforts

The team was weak and could not hold out against the stronger team.

a hold-out

- someone who refuses to give something up

The man was the last hold-out in our effort to make everyone wear a necktie to work.

hold out for (something)

- to refuse to give up, to insist on getting something

The basketball player is holding out for a large salary increase.

hold out on (someone)

- to refuse to give something to someone, to refuse to agree

The players are holding out on the owners and will not sign the new contract.

hold out (one's hand)

- to reach out one's hand, to extend one's hand

The girl held out her hand to help her mother climb up the stairs.

hold out the olive branch to (someone)

- to offer to end a dispute with someone

The company decided to hold out the olive branch to the workers who were on strike.

hold over (something) or hold (something) over

- to extend the engagement of something (like a play or other type of show or performance)

The movie will be held over for another week.

hold (someone) down or hold down (someone)

- to try to keep someone from succeeding

The president of the company is trying to hold down the manager so he does not challenge his position.

hold (someone) hostage

- to keep someone as a hostage

The bank robbers were holding the woman hostage.

hold (someone) in high regard

- to have very great respect for someone

The students hold the principal in high regard.

hold (someone's) attention

- to keep someone interested

The man standing on the bridge held everyone's attention for over an hour.

hold (something) against (someone)

- to blame something on someone

My friend forgot to give me my money but I do not hold it against him as he is a nice person.

hold (something) back or hold back (something)

- to keep information or something to or for oneself

Our boss is holding back the information about the new computer system.

hold still

- to not move

"Please hold still while I fix your jacket zipper."

hold the fort

- to cope in an emergency, to act as a temporary substitute

The assistant has been holding the fort at his company while his boss is on vacation.

hold the line at (something)

- to not yield to pressure, to limit something

Our company is holding the line on any salary increases.

hold the reins

- to be the most influential person

The manager has been holding the reins in his company for many years.

hold true

- to be true, to continue to be correct or true

It usually holds true that the students who always come late get the lowest marks.

hold up

- to remain good, to not become worse

Sales during the first six months of the year are holding up very well compared to last year.

hold up

- to prove to be true

The woman's story held up during the questioning by the police.

a hold-up

- a robbery

I was involved in a hold-up when I was in the supermarket last weekend.

hold up (one's spirits)

- to maintain one's courage or spirits

My friend's spirits are holding up quite well even though she does not have a job now.

hold up (someone) or hold (someone) up

- to rob someone with a gun or knife or similar weapon

The criminal was able to hold up three people before he was caught.

hold up (someone or something) or hold (someone or something) up

- to stop or delay someone or something

The accident held up traffic for over three hours at the border crossing.

hold up (someone or something) as an example of (something) or hold (someone or something) up as an example of (something)

- to point to someone or something as a good example

The teacher held up the student as an example of a good hardworking person.

hold up (something) or hold (something) up

- to lift something, to raise something

The students usually hold up their hands when they have a question.

hold up (something) or hold (something) up

- to support something , to carry something

The main beams in the house hold up the total weight of the house.

hold water

- to be a sound idea

The proposal for a new work scheduling system does not hold water.

hole in one

- a shot in golf that finishes in the hole with one shot

The boy was very lucky and got a hole in one in his first season of golf.

hole in the wall

- a small place to live or work or visit, a small hidden (often inferior) place

We went for a drink at a hole in the wall near the university last night.

hole up (somewhere)

- to hide somewhere

I passed the weekend holed up in my bedroom with a good book.

holier-than-thou

- better than others in goodness or character etc.

I do not like my coworker because he takes a holier-than-thou attitude toward everyone else.

holy cats

- used to express strong feelings of astonishment or pleasure or anger

"Holy cats, the water is rising over the river bank."

holy cow

- used to express strong feelings of astonishment or pleasure or anger

"Holy cow! There are over one hundred people standing in front of our house."

holy mackerel

- used to express strong feelings of astonishment or pleasure or anger

"Holy mackerel," cried the little boy when he saw the new bicycle that he got for his birthday present.

holy Moses

- used to express strong feelings of astonishment or pleasure or anger

"Holy Moses! It is already noon and I haven't even started work yet."

a holy terror

- a very disobedient or unruly child

The little boy is a holy terror and his parents do not like to take him anywhere.

home free

- to be sure of attaining one's goal

The traffic was terrible but we were home free after we left the city.

the honeymoon is over

- the initial period of friendship and cooperation between two groups or two people is over

The honeymoon was over for the new President after several months.

a honky-tonk

- a cheap night-club or dance hall

We went to a honky-tonk in the small town where we stopped last night.

honor a check

- to accept someone's personal check

The store refused to honor the check that I tried to give them.

hook, line and sinker

- without question or doubt, completely

The girl fell in love with her new boyfriend hook, line and sinker.

hook up (something) or hook (something) up

- to connect or fit something together

After we moved into our new apartment we had to hook up the phone.

a hook-up

- a connection

The new hook-up for the computer is not working very well.

hooked on (something)

- to be addicted to a drug or something similar, to be enthusiastic about something

The man has been hooked on drugs since he was a teenager.

a hop, skip and a jump

- a short distance

The hospital was a hop, skip and a jump from our new apartment.

hop to it

- to get started, to start a job

We must hop to it and try to finish this job before dinner.

hope against hope

- to continue to hope when things look very bad

The rescue team hoped against hope that the lost hikers would be found alive.

hopeless at (doing something)

- to be incapable of doing something well

My sister is hopeless at mathematics.

hopped up on (something)

- to be high on a drug or on alcohol

The man who robbed the store was hopped up on some kind of drug.

horn in on (someone)

- to come in without an invitation or welcome, to interfere

The man horned in on our conversation although he knows that we do not like him.

horse around

- to play around, to join in rough teasing with others

The children were horsing around in the school yard when the bell rang for class.

a horse of a different color

- another matter entirely, something else, something that is different than the subject that is being discussed

We should not be talking about that issue now. It is a horse of a different color.

horse sense

- good judgement, wisdom in making decisions

Our boss has good horse sense so you can expect him to make an intelligent decision.

horse trade

- to make a business agreement after hard negotiations

We had to horse trade but we were finally able to reach an agreement to buy the antique car.

hot Idioms

hot air

- nonsense, exaggerated talk

My coworker is full of hot air and you cannot trust what he says.

hot and bothered

- excited and worried, displeased

I do not know what is wrong with our teacher but she is hot and bothered about something.

hot and heavy

- serious passion or emotions

The love scenes in the movie were hot and heavy.

hot on (someone or something)

- to be enthusiastic about someone or something

Recently, my friend is hot on some kinds of classical music.

a hot potato

- a situation or issue that is likely to cause trouble to the person who is handling it

The issue of part-time workers is a hot potato that we must deal with.

a hot rod

- an automobile that is changed so that it can go very fast

My friend has always loved cars and was a member of a hot rod club when he was a teenager.

hot under the collar

- to be very angry

Our boss is hot under the collar today because three of the staff came late.

in hot water

- in trouble

The man has been in hot water at work since he took a week off with no excuse.

a house of cards

- something badly put together that can be easily knocked down, a poorly made plan or action

The peace agreement between the two countries was like a house of cards and fell apart as soon as a minor problem occurred.

How about?

- will you have something or will you agree to something?

"How about some coffee before we go to work?"

How about?

- what is your feeling or thought or desire about something?

"I know that my neighbor is not interested in the job but how about one of her friends?"

How come?

- why?

"How come you don't telephone her if you want to talk to her?"

How so?

- how is it so?

"I know that you think the answer is wrong but how so?"

How's that?

- what did you say?

"How's that? I couldn't hear you because the radio was too loud."

a hue and cry

- an excited protest or alarm or outcry

The bank raised a hue and cry when we did not notify them about our financial problems.

huff and puff

- to breathe very hard

I was huffing and puffing after I walked up several floors in our apartment building.

hung up on (someone or something)

- to be obsessed or devoted to someone or something

My friend is hung up on one of his colleagues at work.

hunger for (something)

- to have a strong desire for something

The men were hungering for adventure when they began their tour of Africa.

hungry for (something)

- to desire something

I was hungry for new music so I bought some new CDs.

hunt high and low for (someone or something)

- to carefully look everywhere for someone or something

I have been hunting high and low for my house keys but I cannot find them.

hurl an insult (at someone)

- to direct or make an insult to someone

The young boys attempted to hurl an insult at the older boy.

hush-hush

- something kept secret or hidden

"Why the big hush-hush? Is there some kind of a secret."

hush money

- money paid to persuade someone to be silent about something

The politician was arrested for trying to pay hush money to a victim of the scandal.

hush up

- to be quiet, to stop talking or crying or making noise

The mother told her child to hush up when they were in the department store.

hush up (someone) or hush (someone) up

- to make someone be quiet

The mother tried to hush up her children.

hush up (something) or hush (something) up

- to keep news of something from getting out, to prevent people from knowing about something

The government tried to hush up the bad economic news but the media soon discovered the facts.

hustle and bustle

- a large amount of activity and work that is usually done in a noisy and busy place

There is much hustle and bustle downtown every Saturday morning.

hyped-up

- to have an excess of energy, to be excited

My aunt has been hyped up all morning because she will go to Italy for a holiday next week.

I

idiot box

- television set

My friend sits in front of the idiot box all weekend and never does anything.

if looks could kill

- used when someone makes an unfriendly look at someone or frowns at someone

If looks could kill, then the horrible way that the woman looked at me would have killed me immediately.

if so

- if that is the case

The lawyer said that he wants to meet us this afternoon but if so, we will not have the documents ready to discuss.

if the shoe fits, wear it

- if something that is said describes you then it probably is meant for you

The man was complaining that many workers at his company were lazy. However, his friend looked at him and said that if the shoe fits, wear it.

if worst comes to worst

- if the worst possible thing happens

If worst comes to worst we can cancel our holiday and go next year.

ill at ease

- nervous or uncomfortable

The man appeared to be ill at ease during the interview.

ill-disposed to (do something)

- not friendly or favorable to something

Our company is ill-disposed to begin working on the project with the other company.

ill-gotten gains

- money or other goods acquired illegally or dishonestly

The man used his ill-gotten gains from the sale of the stolen car to go on a holiday.

ill will

- hostile feelings or intentions

There is much ill will between the two departments in our company.

implicate (someone) in (something)

- to suggest that someone is involved in something

The man was implicated in the scheme to sell the illegal shares in the company.

in Idioms

in a bad mood

- sad, depressed

I was in a bad mood after I wrote the university exam.

in a bad way

- in a bad or critical state

The woman is in a bad way after her recent car accident.

in a bind

- in trouble

The couple will be in a bind if they cannot sell their house by next month.

in a coon's age

- in a very long time

I have not seen my friend in a coon's age.

in a family way

- pregnant, going to have a baby

Our new secretary is in a family way and plans to stop working soon.

in a flash

- quickly

I was finished with the job interview in a flash.

in a fog/haze

- confused, not sure what is happening

The man is always in a fog and never seems to know what is going on.

in a fool's paradise

- looking happy but in a situation that will not last

The couple were living in a fool's paradise with their temporary jobs and the high salaries.

in a hole

- in some trouble, in an embarrassing or difficult position

The man is in a hole now that he has problems both at work and at home.

in a huff

- in an angry or offended manner

The head of our department left the meeting in a huff.

in a hurry

- moving or acting quickly

My friend is very busy and always in a hurry.

in a jam

- in trouble, in a difficult situation

My neighbor is in a jam now that his car is not working properly.

in a jiffy

- very fast, very soon

I promised that I would be finished with the phone in a jiffy.

in a kind of way

- to a certain extent, a little, somewhat

In a kind of way, I want to buy a new car but in other ways I do not think that I need one.

in a lather

- excited and agitated

My friend was in a lather when she heard that she would be transferring to another department.

in a little bit

- soon

"I will give you back your dictionary in a little bit."

in a mad rush

- in a hurry, frantically

The woman was in a mad rush to finish her shopping and return home.

in a month of Sundays

- in a very long time

I have not been to the shopping mall in a month of Sundays.

in a nutshell

- briefly

I tried to explain the problem to my boss in a nutshell.

in a pickle

- in a mess, in trouble

My friend is in a pickle now that she has lost her job.

in a pig's eye

- hardly, unlikely, never

I will let my friend borrow my car in a pig's eye.

in a pinch

- something is okay when nothing else is available

The other tool will do in a pinch if we cannot find the correct one.

in a pretty pickle

- in a mess, in trouble

The woman was in a pretty pickle when her car had no gas.

in a quandary

- confused and uncertain about what to do

I am in a quandary about where I should go on my vacation next month.

in a rush

- in a hurry

They did the job in a rush so I am worried about the quality.

in a rut

- always doing the same thing

The woman feels that she is in a rut after doing the same job for seven years.

in a sense

- in a way, sort of

In a sense, I can understand what my friend's problem is but it is still difficult to imagine what he wants to say.

in a snit

- in a fit of anger or irritation

My girlfriend is in a snit because I forgot to phone her on Saturday.

in a sort of way

- to a certain extent, a little, somewhat

The man is quite intelligent in a sort of way.

in a split second

- in just an instant

The car accident happened in a split second and nobody could prevent it.

in a spot

- in some trouble, in an embarrassing or difficult situation

The girl is in a spot now as she was unable to enter university and has no job.

in a stew (about someone or something)

- upset or bothered about someone or something

The woman's husband is in a stew because he has lost his car keys.

in a stupor

- in a dazed condition

I was in a stupor after I wrote my last exam.

in a tight spot

- in a difficult situation

The man was in a tight spot after he lost his job.

in a tizzy

- in an excited and confused condition

The girl was in a tizzy as she got ready for her friend's wedding.

in a way

- to a certain extent, a little, somewhat

In a way, I want to go to the restaurant but basically I do not care.

in a word

- briefly, to sum up

In a word, the problem with the car is that it needs a new motor.

in a world of one's own

- in deep thought or concentration, not caring about other people

The boy is in a world of his own and he does not notice what other people say or think.

in abeyance

- the temporary suspension of an activity or a ruling

The final estate settlement was in abeyance while the lawyers looked at the will in more detail.

in accordance with (something)

- in agreement with something, following the terms or requirements of something

In accordance with the wishes of my grandfather we did not sell the family farm.

in addition to (something)

- additionally, further

In addition to a degree in history my friend also has a degree in economics.

in advance

- ahead of time

We bought the tickets in advance so we could get a good seat.

in agreement

- in harmony, agreeing

All of the members of the team were in agreement regarding the new training schedule.

in all

- in total, all together

There were about twenty people in all at the restaurant.

in all one's born days

- in all one's life

In all my born days I have never met a more stubborn person.

in all probability

- very likely

In all probability I will not be able to attend my classes during the next two weeks.

in all shapes and sizes

- in many or various kinds/types/forms

The running shoes came in all shapes and sizes.

in and of itself

- considering one thing alone

In and of itself there is no problem having a large number of people at the dinner. However, the fire regulations do not allow that many people to be in the building

in and out

- coming in and going out often

Our boss has been in and out all day but I do not know where he is at the moment.

in any case/event

- no matter what happens, surely, without fail

I may not be able to meet you next week but in any case I will give you the books before then.

in arms

- armed, angry and ready to fight

The workers are in arms since they learned about the wage decrease.

in arrears

- overdue (used for bills or money), late

I have never been in arrears with my bill payments.

in awe of (someone or something)

- fearful and respectful of someone or something

The children were in awe of the firemen who came to visit the school.

in bad faith

- with bad or dishonest intent

The man was bargaining in bad faith when he tried to buy the car.

in bad taste

- not suitable, offensive

The jokes that the man told at the dinner were in bad taste.

in between

- located in the middle of two things or states

My friend is in between jobs at the moment.

in black and white

- in writing

I want to see the proposal in black and white before I go to the meeting.

in bloom/blossom

- a flower or tree at the peak of blooming

All of the flowers are in bloom in our garden.

in brief

- briefly

I explained in brief what the new supervisor was supposed to do while I was on vacation.

in broad daylight

- publicly visible in the daytime

The robbery of the store took place in broad daylight.

in bulk

- in large quantities or amounts

We usually buy some of our food in bulk.

in cahoots with (someone)

- in secret agreement or partnership with someone

The supermarket was in cahoots with the vegetable producer to try and keep the prices high.

in care of (someone)

- something is sent to someone at someone else's address

My income tax refund was sent to me in care of my company.

in case

- if, if something should happen

I will take my umbrella in case it rains.

in case of

- in the event of, if there should be, as a precaution

In case of fire, we keep our computer backup files in a fireproof safe.

in character

- as usual, typical, in the way that a person usually behaves

Supporting the members of her staff is in character with the way our manager operates.

in charge of (someone or something)

- in control or authority, responsible for someone or something

The new manager is in charge of the sales department at his company.

in check

- under control, kept quiet

The violence was kept in check by the army.

in clover

- rich or successful, having a pleasant or easy life

The couple are in clover now that they have sold their business and retired.

in cold blood

- without feeling or pity, coolly and deliberately

The family was murdered in cold blood by the criminal gang.

in common

- shared together or equally, in use or ownership by all

I have nothing in common with the other members of the class.

in concert (with someone)

- with a common plan, with the aid of someone

We made the presentation in concert with members of another company.

in conjunction (with someone or something)

- operating or functioning or working together

The school concert was done in conjunction with the community center.

in consequence of (something)

- as a result of something

In consequence of losing my job, I can no longer live in my present apartment.

in contempt of court

- disrespecting a judge or courtroom procedures

The woman was in contempt of court when she refused to sit quietly during the trial.

in custody of (someone or something)

- being looked after by someone or something, under guard by someone

The child was placed in custody of the state while her mother got treatment for her alcohol problem.

in debt

- owing money

The man has been in debt for most of his life.

in deep

- seriously mixed up in something like debt or other trouble

The man is in deep because of debt and other problems.

in deep water

- in a serious situation, in trouble

The boy is in deep water because of his problems at school.

in defiance of (someone or something)

- against someone's will or against instructions

The company continued to operate their business in defiance of a court order.

in denial

- refusing to believe something that is true

The man is in denial about the fact that he may lose his job.

in depth

- completely and in detail

The man studied the material in depth before he made his decision.

in detail

- giving all the details, item by item

I told the police about the events in detail.

I explained how to fix the computer in detail.

in disguise

- looking like someone else

The bank robber was in disguise when he robbed the bank.

in drag

- wearing the clothes of the opposite sex

The couple were shocked when they went to a stage show and found many of the performers in drag.

in due course

- in the usual amount of time, at the right time

We will send the information to you in due course.

in Dutch (with someone)

- in trouble with someone

The boy was in Dutch with his father for breaking the window.

in earnest

- sincerely

The young woman has been looking for a job in earnest since she graduated.

in effect

- for practical purposes, basically

The man's silence was in effect, a way of disagreeing with the other people in the meeting.

in effect

- in existence, operating or functioning

The smoking law has been in effect for three years.

in essence

- basically

I was told in essence about the problems that the company was having.

in exchange for (someone or something)

- in return for someone or something

I received the camera in exchange for several discount coupons.

in excess of

- more than

There were in excess of two hundred people at the meeting.

in existence

- now existing

The company has been in existence for many years.

in fact

- actually, the truth is

Our teacher has been to China before. In fact, he has been there three times.

in fashion

- fashionable

Very thin neckties are not in fashion now.

in favor of (someone or something)

- approving or supporting someone or something

Most members of the city council are in favor of building the new stadium.

in flight

- while flying

Two wonderful meals were served while we were in flight.

in flux

- in constant change, changing

The school administration has been in flux for several months now.

in for (something)

- unable to avoid something, sure to get something

The student is in for much trouble now that he cannot finish his graduation essay.

in force

- in a very large group

The fans came out in force to cheer for their favorite team.

in full

- completely, fully, totally

The woman pays everything that she owes on her credit card in full every month.

in full swing

- in progress

The campaign to stop people from smoking is in full swing.

in general

- in most situations or circumstances

In general, most people are happy with the new manager.

in good conscience

- having good motives

I wrote the letter and complained to the woman in good conscience.

in good faith

- with good and honest intentions

Our company was bargaining in good faith when they met the other company.

in good hands

- in the safe and competent care of someone

My dog was in good hands when my father looked after him.

in good repair

- in good condition

My car is always in good repair when I leave for a holiday.

in good shape/condition

- functioning or working well, in good physical condition

Our television set was in good shape when we gave it to my friend.

My grandfather is in good shape.

in good spirits

- happy or cheerful or positive

Everyone was in good spirits when they went to the beach for a picnic.

in good time

- a little early, sooner than necessary

I will try and get the information to you in good time so that you can decide what to do.

in good with (someone)

- in someone's favor

My cousin is in good with his boss and he has an easy time at work.

in great demand

- wanted by many people

The young pianist is in great demand by symphony orchestras around the world.

in hand

- under control

The teacher had the class in hand when the principal came to visit the classroom.

in heaven

- in a state of absolute happiness, dead and in heaven

I felt that I was in heaven when I learned that I would get the job that I wanted.

in high gear

- very fast and active

The preparations for the party were in high gear when I arrived at the house.

in hindsight

- thinking about the past with the knowledge that one now has

In hindsight, I knew that I had not done well in the job interview.

in hock

- in a pawnshop

The man put his expensive ring in hock to get some money for a holiday.

in honor of (someone or something)

- showing respect or admiration for someone or something

The dinner was in honor of the first principal of our school.

in hopes of (something)

- expecting something

I wrote the entrance exam in hopes of entering my favorite university.

in horror

- with intense shock or disgust

I watched in horror as the car crashed into the truck.

in hot water

- in trouble

I am in hot water over the extra expenses that I used during the conference.

in ink

- written or signed with a pen

We were asked to write down our names and addresses in ink.

in its entirety

- in a state of completeness

I read the novel in its entirety although it was very difficult to read.

in its/someone's own right

- independent of any other relationship

The man is a great painter in his own right.

in itself

- standing alone or taken alone or separately

In itself the repair was acceptable but it was still not what we wanted.

in jeopardy

- in danger, at risk

Our contract with the large company was in jeopardy because of our inability to quickly provide them with our products.

in keeping with (something)

- continuing with something, doing something similar

In keeping with our tradition of letting the visiting team kick first we will do it for this game as well.

in kind

- payment for something with some goods rather than money

We will pay our neighbors in kind for the use of their sailboat.

in labor

- a woman going through childbirth

The woman was in labor for three hours.

in league with (someone)

- in secret agreement or partnership with someone

The union is working in league with management to close the factory.

in less than no time

- very quickly

My friend had to go to the bank but in less than no time he returned to my house.

in lieu of (something)

- in place of something, instead of something

We received a free movie pass in lieu of a refund of our movie ticket.

in light of (something)

- as a result of new information about something, because of something

In light of the man's contribution to the company we gave him a large summer bonus.

in limbo

- in an indefinite state, a state of neglect, a region on the border of hell

Everything in our company is in limbo as we wait for news of the takeover bid.

in line

- standing and waiting in a line of people

We stood in line for three hours while waiting for the concert tickets.

in line

- doing or being what people expect or accept, within ordinary limits

It was difficult to keep the children in line at the picnic but we managed.

in line with (someone or something)

- to be in agreement with someone or something

The man's opinions are in line with the opinions of the other members of his group.

in love

- liking or loving someone very much

The young man has been in love with his girlfriend ever since he met her in high school.

in luck

- having good luck, finding something good by chance

I think that we are in luck. I was able to buy two tickets for the concert.

in memory of (someone or something)

- as a reminder of someone or something, as a memorial to someone or something

We decided to collect some money and buy a painting in memory of our grandfather.

in mint condition

- in perfect condition

The old coins that my father gave me are in mint condition.

in name only

- not actual, only by name

The man was an animal doctor in name only and had never once treated a sick or injured animal.

in need

- someone requires basic things like food or clothing or housing

The victims of the hurricane were in need after the storm.

in need of (someone or something)

- requiring someone or something

We are in need of a new stove in our apartment.

in neutral

- a car's motor is running but the gear is in neutral so the car does not move, something does not move

I put the car in neutral as I waited for the train to pass.

in no mood to (do something)

- not feeling like doing something

I was in no mood to argue with my friend this morning.

in no time

- soon, quickly

I will have this job done in no time and then I can go for lunch.

in no uncertain terms

- in very specific and direct language

I told my neighbor in no uncertain terms that I wanted the music to stop.

in nothing flat

- quickly

I will have this information printed out in nothing flat.

in on (something)

- joining together for something

We went in on a present for our father for Father's Day.

in on (something/a secret)

- told about something, having knowledge of something

I was finally in on the secret about why the supervisor left our company.

in one ear and out the other

- heard and then immediately forgotten

Everything that the teacher says seems to go in one ear and out the other for my friend.

in one fell swoop

- as a single incident or event

In one fell swoop we sold our car and furniture and moved to Germany.

in one's birthday suit

- naked, nude

The little boy was running around in his birthday suit after his bath.

in one's blood

- built into one's personality or character

Riding a horse is in the girl's blood and she is very good at it.

in one's book

- according to one's own opinion

In my book, she is the best teacher that we have ever had.

in one's cups

- drunk

I think that my grandfather was in his cups when he wrote the letter to his friend.

in one's element

- in an environment or situation that comes naturally to someone

The woman is in her element being in charge of the new sales department.

in one's face

- abruptly, unexpectedly

The plan blew up in our face just as we were ready to start.

in one's glory

- at one's best or happiest

I was in my glory when I got the best tickets for the game.

in one's good books/graces

- approved of by someone, liked by someone

I am in my friend's good books after helping her with her homework last month.

in one's hair

- annoying someone

The child has been in my hair all morning because she is on holidays now.

in one's mind's eye

- in one's imagination

In my mind's eye I tried to imagine that I was on a nice sunny beach.

in one's opinion

- according to one's belief or judgement

In my opinion, my aunt is the best cook in the world.

in one's (own) backyard

- very close to someone

Nobody wants the chicken farm in their own backyard.

in one's own best interest(s)

- to one's advantage or benefit

It was in my friend's own best interests to move into a larger apartment with his family.

in one's prime

- at one's peak or best time

My cousin was in his prime when he entered the bicycle race.

in one's right mind

- rational and sensible

The girl was not in her right mind to quit her job right now.

in one's salad days

- in one's youth

In her salad days my mother was a very good dancer.

in one's second childhood

- interested in or doing things that children normally do

My uncle is in his second childhood and has just bought a sports car.

in one's shell

- withdrawn, silent, not sociable

We are trying to get the girl out of her shell but she still does not want to talk to anyone.

in one's shoes

- in someone else's place or position

I wish that I was in my friend's shoes with his great job and new car.

in one's spare time

- in one's free time

My cousin likes to fix old clocks in his spare time.

in one's Sunday best

- in one's best clothes that you would wear to go to worship in a church (in the days when people dressed in a more formal way to attend church)

I was dressed in my Sunday best when I went for the job interview.

in one's tracks

- abruptly, immediately, exactly where one is at the moment

I stopped in my tracks when I saw the snake on the road.

in order to

- for the purpose of

They have decided to close down the school for the summer in order to do some major repairs.

in other words

- in a different (usually more direct) way

"In other words, if I do not finish my assignment by Wednesday, I will not pass the course."

in over one's head

- having more difficulties than one can manage

The supervisor was in over his head when he began to fire people for no reason.

in part

- to some extent, partly

I think that the reason my uncle is not golfing well this year is in part because of his back problem.

in particular

- specifically, especially

My father likes almost all sports but in particular he loves basketball.

in passing

- casually, as an aside

I mentioned to my friend in passing that I want to change jobs.

in pencil

- written or signed with a pencil

I wrote the exam in pencil so that I could change some of the answers easily.

in perpetuity

- eternally, forever

The high school was given the right to use the city park in perpetuity.

in person

- actually present at a place or event

I had to go to the bank and sign the papers in person.

in place

- in the proper place or location

Everything in the room was in place when we arrived for the meeting.

in place of (someone or something)

- instead of someone or something

I was able to play in the soccer tournament in place of an injured player.

in plain language/English

- in simple and clear language

My bank explained to me in plain English what the terms of the loan were.

in point of fact

- really, truthfully

In point of fact there were not enough people at the meeting to vote on the proposal.

in poor taste

- not suitable, offensive

The clothes that the woman wore to the dinner were in poor taste.

in practice

- the actual situation or way of doing something

In practice, the business does not operate the way that you would expect it to.

in practice

- well-practiced, well-exercised

The girl was not in practice and could not play the piano very well.

in principle

- as a general idea or principle but without considering details or practical possibilities
In principle, the plan sounded very good but actually it was not very good at all.

in print

- a book or magazine is available for sale from the publisher
The book which I am looking for is still in print.

in private

- privately
The meeting was held in private in the office of the school principal.

in progress

- taking place at this time
The meeting is now in progress so we cannot enter the room.

in proportion

- having the right or wrong proportion in relation to something else
We tried to make sure that the bookshelves were both in proportion when we rebuilt the house.

in public

- in a place or in a way where other people can see
People are not allowed to smoke in public in many places.

in pursuit of (something)

- chasing after something
The young man has been in pursuit of his dream of becoming a doctor for a long time.

in rags

- dressed in worn-out and torn clothing
The man standing outside the restaurant was in rags.

in reality

- really
The woman said that she wants a job but in reality I do not think that she wants to work.

in receipt of (something)

- having received something
I am in receipt of an order from the city to cut down a tree in our backyard.

in recent memory

- the recent period of time in which you can remember things
In recent memory, our football team has never been as strong as it is this year.

in rehearsal

- developing or practicing for a play or opera or concert
The play has been in rehearsal for two weeks.

in remission

- a disease that seems to be getting better
The cancer of my neighbor's mother has been in remission for several months now.

in retrospect

- thinking about the past with the knowledge that one now has
In retrospect, I would have handled the conflict with my friend very differently.

in return for (someone or something)

- as part of an exchange, as a way of paying someone back
In return for cleaning his carpets my friend helped me clean up our basement.

in round numbers/figures

- an estimated number, a figure that has been rounded off
I was able to learn, in round numbers, how much it would cost to paint our house.

in ruin

- destroyed
Most of the hotels along the beach were in ruin after the hurricane.

in search of (someone or something)

- trying to find someone or something

I have been in search of a good family restaurant for several months now.

in season

- currently available for sale, legally able to be caught or hunted

Cherries are in season now and they are very delicious.

in secret

- secretly

The meeting to talk about building the new hospital took place in secret.

in session

- a court or organization is operating or functioning

The court has been in session since 9:00 AM.

in seventh heaven

- very happy

I have been in seventh heaven since I started my new job.

in shambles

- in a messy state

The house was in shambles after the two boys played in it all day.

in short

- stated briefly

"In short, I have already explained how we are going to complete the next project."

in short order

- very quickly

I finished my work in short order and joined my friends at the restaurant.

in short supply

- not enough, in less than the amount or number needed

Chairs were in short supply so some guests had to sit on the floor.

in sight

- able to be seen

There were no birds in sight so we went back to the hotel and stopped bird watching for the day.

in single file

- lined up, one behind the other

Everybody lined up in single file behind their leader.

in so far as

- to the extent that

In so far as the new office hours go I totally agree with my boss.

(not) in so many words

- (not) exactly, (not) explicitly

My teacher told me about the problems in our class but not in so many words.

in some/many respects

- with regard to some or many details

In many respects our new house is much more convenient than our previous one.

in some way/ways

- in some unspecified way or manner, by some unspecified means

In some ways I know what my friend thinks but in some ways I do not.

in (someone's) clutches

- in the control of someone who has power over someone else

The young boy is in his friend's clutches and cannot make up his mind for himself.

in (someone's) favor

- to someone's advantage or credit

The judge decided the court case in our favor and we did not have to pay the court costs.

in (someone's) name

- in someone's ownership or property

I put my father's car in my name when he gave it to me.

in (someone's) prayers

- remembered by name when someone prays

My friend's father was in my prayers when he went to the hospital.

in (someone's) shoes/place

- seeing or experiencing something from another's point of view

I wish that my father could be in my shoes and understand some of my problems at work.

in spite of

- in opposition to, despite

In spite of the terrible weather we went to the beach for a picnic.

in step with (someone or something)

- marching with the same rhythm as someone else, in agreement with the others in a group

All of the members of our group were in step with each other regarding the New Year's party.

in stitches

- laughing

Everybody was in stitches after their teacher's joke.

in stock

- available or ready to sell or use

The store did not have the computer security system in stock.

in storage

- in a place where things are stored or kept

We put our furniture in storage and went for a trip around the world.

in store

- ready to happen, waiting

I do not know what the future has in store for me but I am ready for anything.

in style

- in fashion, fashionable

Recently, my clothes are not in style.

in surgery

- undergoing surgery, doing surgery

My grandfather was in surgery for several hours this morning.

in tandem

- in single file

The students walked in tandem as they went to the sports festival.

in tatters

- torn or destroyed

My backpack was in tatters after the dogs finished playing with it.

in terms of (something)

- with regard to something

In terms of our agreement with the other company we were not allowed to sell our products online.

in the absence of (someone or something)

- without someone or something

In the absence of any concrete plans for the building we decided to sell it.

in the act of (doing something)

- while doing something

The young man was arrested in the act of stealing an MP3 player from the store.

in the affirmative

- saying yes

Everybody in the class voted in the affirmative to go golfing for the field trip.

in the aggregate

- considered together, when considered as a total

In the aggregate the costs for the new recreation complex are very high.

in the air

- current, exerting an influence

It is in the air that we will be getting a new supervisor next week.

in the bag

- certain, sure

The contract will be in the bag if we put in a good proposal.

in the balance

- in an undecided state

Our decision to buy a car was in the balance as we tried to borrow money from the bank.

in the ballpark

- in a particular area or range (from a baseball field)

The offer for our house was not in the ballpark of an acceptable offer so we did not sell it.

in/into the bargain

- in addition to what was expected

The store put a camping stove into the bargain when we bought the camping equipment.

in the best of health

- very healthy

My father has been in the best of health for many years now.

in the black

- having a credit balance, making a profit

Our company has been in the black for over three years now.

in the buff

- naked, nude

I was in the buff when the doorbell rang.

in the cards

- expected, likely to happen, predictable

I think that a new company policy is in the cards but I am not sure.

in the care of (someone)

- being cared for or looked after by someone

The child was left in the care of her aunt.

in the case of (someone or something)

- in the matter of someone or something

In the case of the man who stole the car he went to jail for several months.

in the charge of

- under the care or supervision of

The girl has been in the charge of her grandmother since the girl's mother and father died.

in the chips

- wealthy

My aunt has been in the chips since she won the lottery.

in the clear

- with nothing to limit action, free of anything that makes moving or seeing difficult

We seem to be in the clear now so it should be safe to cross the road.

in the clear

- free of blame or suspicion

The police talked to the boy for a few minutes and he seems to be in the clear now.

in the clouds

- far from real life, in dreams, in thought

The man's head is usually in the clouds so it is difficult to talk to him.

in the context of (something)

- in the circumstances under which something has happened

In the context of his job I could understand what my friend was saying.

in the course of

- during

In the course of his life the man visited over 45 countries.

in the dark (about something)

- to have no information about something

My boss is in the dark about my plans to quit my job.

in the doghouse

- in trouble

The man is in the doghouse with his wife after staying out late last night.

in the doldrums

- sluggish, in low spirits

My mother has been in the doldrums since she came back from her holidays.

in the driver's seat

- in control

I am in the driver's seat regarding where we go for our holiday.

in the end

- eventually, ultimately

In the end, I decided not to go to a movie with my friend.

in the event of (something)

- if something happens

In the event of a fire, everybody must immediately leave the building by the front door.

in the final/last analysis

- in truth, when all the facts are known

In the final analysis, I believe that it will be impossible to continue with our present policy.

in the first place

- firstly, to begin with

"Of course I cannot go. In the first place, I must work on Saturday. In the second place, I have no money."

in the flesh

- in person, present

I have never met the president of our university in the flesh.

in the groove

- at one's best, doing something very well

We are in the groove and should be able to finish this job by early next week.

in the hole

- having a score lower than zero in a game

At the beginning of the game we were in the hole but later we began to do well.

in the hole

- in debt, losing money

Although my friend is always working he always seems to be in the hole.

in the homestretch

- the last part of something

The project to build the new bridge is now in the homestretch.

in the interest of (someone or something)

- as a benefit to someone or something, to advance or improve someone or something
In the interest of improving staff communication we had a large barbecue so that people could meet each other.

in the interim

- in the time between the ending and beginning of something
The school is not yet built so in the interim we will have our classes in an office building.

in the know

- knowledgeable
I do not think that our teacher is in the know about the problems in the other classes.

in the lap of luxury

- in luxurious surroundings
I have been living in the lap of luxury since I got a big salary increase at work.

in the limelight

- at the center of attention
Our police chief has been in the limelight since the scandal began.

in the line of duty

- done as part of a job
The police officer was killed in the line of duty during a bank robbery.

in the long run

- in the distant future, in the end
My uncle is losing money on his stocks but in the long run he should make money.

in the loop

- part of a group that is kept up-to-date with information about something
I am not in the loop at work and I do not know what is happening there.

in the mainstream

- following trends or styles that are currently popular or common
My brother has never been in the mainstream when it comes to working and raising a family.

in the market for (something)

- wanting or ready to buy something
I am in the market for a new computer because my old one is too slow.

in the meantime

- the period of time between now and the beginning of something
I cannot go to university now so in the meantime I am going to a junior college.

in the middle of nowhere

- in a very remote place
We stopped in the middle of nowhere to have a picnic.

in the money

- wealthy, the winning position in a race
Now that my cousin is working, he is finally in the money.

in the mood for (something)

- feeling like doing something
I am not in the mood for pizza this evening.

in the nature of (something)

- being similar in type or character to something, rather like something
The complaint was in the nature of a telephone call to the company.

in the near future

- in the time immediately ahead
In the near future, I plan to move to a smaller apartment and try to save some money.

in the nick of time

- just in time, just before it is too late

I was able to answer the telephone just in the nick of time.

in the nude

- naked

I was in the nude after my shower when the phone rang.

in the offing

- happening at some time in the future

There is a meeting in the offing to try and make a new schedule for the junior tennis games.

in the open

- in an area that is not closed in, outdoors

Everybody was in the open during the wedding when the rain began to fall.

in the picture

- knowing something, having information about something

I am not in the picture about my friend's wedding plans.

in the pink

- in very good health

My grandmother is in the pink and is doing very well.

in the prime of life

- in the best and most productive and healthy period of life

The young man was in a terrible car accident and died in the prime of life.

in the public eye

- seen by the public, visible to everyone

The actor has not been in the public eye since he got into trouble with the law.

in the raw

- naked, nude

The little boy was playing in the park in the raw.

in the rear

- behind someone or something

There were several trucks in the rear as the vehicles crossed the desert.

in the red

- losing money, not making a profit

The company has been in the red for three years now.

in the right

- on the right or legal side of an issue

I was in the right when I was involved in the car accident at the intersection.

in the right place at the right time

- in a place or time that is beneficial to you

I was lucky to be in the right place at the right time when I found my job.

in the running

- competing and having a chance to win

I think that I am in the running for a promotion at my company.

in the saddle

- in command, in control

The president is back in the saddle after being ill for several months.

in the same boat

- in a similar situation

We are all in the same boat now that our store has gone out of business.

in the same breath

- saying something at the same time

My friend said that he was busy on Friday but in the same breath he suggested that we go away for the weekend.

in the same league as (someone or something)

- at the same level as someone or something

Our soccer team is not in the same league as the opposition team.

in the second place

- in addition, secondly

In the first place, I am very tired and in the second place, I do not have enough money to go to the movie.

in the shape of (something)

- in the form of something

The candle was in the shape of a hand.

in the short run

- in or for the immediate future

In the short run, I do not think that my uncle will make much money with his fast food business.

in the soup

- in serious trouble, in disorder

The girl is in the soup now that she has had a fight with her boss.

in the swim

- active in something, knowing what is going on

My colleague is definitely in the swim. He has information about everybody.

in the trust of (someone)

- under the responsibility or care of someone

My grandmother's money was placed in the trust of my mother.

in the twinkling of an eye

- very quickly

In the twinkling of an eye, the little boy disappeared in the department store.

in the unlikely event of/that

- if something which probably will not happen actually happens

In the unlikely event that the money will not be transferred to the bank we will send a check.

in the wake of (something)

- as a result of something, following something

In the wake of the large number of people who have recently left our company we will need to hire some new people.

in the way

- in a position to obstruct something, to hinder or interfere with something

The taxi was in the way and the bus could not pass.

in the wind

- soon to happen, being planned or discussed

It is in the wind that we are planning to open a new store next year.

in the works

- in preparation, being planned or worked on

The construction of the new school is in the works.

in the worst way

- very much

I would like to go to the new movie in the worst way.

in the wrong

- wrong, against justice or truth or fact

The driver was in the wrong and was arrested by the police after the accident.

in the wrong place at the wrong time

- something bad happens in a place or time where you happen to be

The man was in the wrong place at the wrong time when the car hit him.

in theory

- theoretically, what should be correct according to some rule or principle

In theory, it is possible to make much money selling real estate but in practice it is very difficult.

in this day and age

- presently, currently

In this day and age it is almost impossible to find a store that sells the old style of cassette tape players.

in time

- before the time necessary (to do something)

I did not arrive in time to meet my cousin.

in time with (someone or something)

- at the same speed or rhythm as someone or something

The woman is never in time with the rest of the orchestra.

in times past

- long ago, in previous times

In times past, many people attended the sports festival in the small town.

in top form

- in very good physical condition

The tennis star was in top form during the big tournament.

in touch

- talking or writing to each other, giving or getting news

We are still in touch even though we have been out of school for many years.

in tow

- being pulled

The truck had a trailer in tow when it crashed on the highway.

in tow

- being taken from place to place, going along with someone

The woman spent the morning at the shopping center with her child in tow.

in transit

- in the process of being transported

The cars were in transit when there was a train and truck accident.

in trouble

- in danger, in difficulty

The boy in trouble with the school this term.

in tune

- going well together, in agreement, matching

We have been in tune with each other ever since we met at our high school graduation party.

in tune

- having or producing the correct or required pitch

The members of the orchestra were in tune when the concert started.

in turn

- each following another

Everybody went to the front of the class in turn in order to pick up their diplomas.

in two shakes of a lamb's tail

- quickly, in no time at all

"I will have this finished in two shakes of a lamb's tail."

in unison

- acting as one, together and at the same time

The fans cried out in unison when the star player scored a goal.

in vain

- without effect, without success

I tried in vain to find a good job in the small town.

in view of (something)

- after thinking about something, because of something

In view of the large number of people who have come, I think that we will need a bigger room.

in with (someone)

- in friendship or favor or closeness with someone

The boy was in with the wrong group of people when he went to high school.

inch along

- to move along slowly

The road was very crowded this morning and the traffic was only inching along.

inch by inch

- little by little, one inch at a time

I checked the park inch by inch to try and find my watch.

inclined to (do something)

- to tend toward doing something

Our boss is inclined to let us take extra days off work during the slow summer months.

incumbent upon (someone) to (do something)

- necessary for someone to do something

It is incumbent upon the next mayor to try and do something about crime in the city.

ins and outs of (something)

- all the details of something

The supervisor knows the ins and outs of the new machine.

inside and out

- in every part, completely

We checked the room inside and out for my lost wallet.

inside out

- with the inside facing the outside

The woman turned her purse inside out in order to look for her lost key.

inside track

- an advantage, the shortest distance around a racetrack

I think that the man has the inside track on getting the new job at the computer company.

insist on (something)

- to say that you must have something, to press your wishes on others

The man insists on having tea every morning before he goes to work.

instead of

- in place of

"Let's meet at the restaurant instead of at the department store as we had planned."

instrumental in (doing something)

- playing an important part in doing something

Our teacher was instrumental in getting the school to change their policy on using the library after school.

intent on (doing something)

- to be determined to do something

I am intent on buying some new furniture when we move to a new house.

into being

- into existence

The new parking regulations came into being early last week.

into thin air

- completely, without anything left

The group of hikers vanished into thin air and were never heard from again.

invasion of (someone's) privacy

- intruding and causing someone to lose their privacy

It was an invasion of our privacy when the supervisor opened the mail that we received in the company.

invest (something) in (something)

- to put one's time and effort and energy into doing something

We are investing a lot of time in the project for the new counseling center for young people.

iron out (something) or iron (something) out

- to work out something, to solve a problem

We have ironed out all of our problems at work and we are doing better now.

irons in the fire

- the things that one is doing, the projects with which a person is busy

Recently, my coworker has too many irons in the fire. That is why he became sick.

issue a call for (something)

- to make a public invitation or request for something

The government issued a call for people to donate goods to help the hurricane victims.

it figures

- it seems likely, it seems reasonable

It figures that the children were loud while they were playing.

itching palm

- a wish for money, greed

The guard at the hotel has an itching palm so we must be careful of him.

J

a jack-of-all-trades

- a person who can do many things

We gave the man a job because we needed a jack-of-all-trades to look after the building repairs.

jack up (something)

- to raise prices, to raise something with a lifting device

The gas station jacked up their gas prices during the storm.

We jacked up the car so that we could change the tire.

jam on the brakes

- to quickly put the brakes on to stop a car or truck etc.

I jammed on the brakes to avoid hitting the child.

jam-packed

- crowded, full

The train this morning was jam-packed with people.

jazz up (something)

- to brighten up something, to add more noise or movement or color to something

They jazzed up the community center for the party last night.

Jekyll and Hyde

- someone with both an evil and a good personality

My co-worker is like Jekyll and Hyde. One minute he is very friendly but the next minute he is angry.

jet lag

- to be tired because you have travelled a long distance in an airplane and have crossed many time zones so your body cannot adjust

I had jet lag for several days after my long trip.

jockey for position

- to try to push one's way into an advantageous position

Several of the salesmen began to jockey for position when they learned that the director of sales was leaving.

jog (someone's) memory

- to stimulate someone's memory to recall something

The questions that the police officer asked helped to jog the man's memory.

John Doe

- a name used for an unknown or average person

The application form uses the name "John Doe" as the name of a person who is applying for something.

John Hancock

- one's signature

I wrote down my John Hancock and bought the car.

John Henry

- one's signature

"Please sign your John Henry here and we will process your order immediately."

Johnny-come-lately

- a new-comer

The man is a Johnny-come-lately and does not really know what he is talking about.

Johnny-on-the-spot

- someone who is at the right place when needed or is right on time

The caretaker is always Johnny-on-the-spot. Just when we need him he arrives.

join forces (with someone)

- to unite or join with someone

The two high schools joined forces to try and raise money for the city library.

join hands

- to hold hands with other people

Everybody in the group joined hands at the end of the meeting.

Join the club!

- an expression used when another person is in the same situation (usually bad) as the speaker

"Join the club. None of us have enough money to go on a holiday."

join the fray

- to join a fight or argument

I did not want to join the fray and argue with the other members of the group.

jolt to a stop

- to stop moving suddenly which causes a jolt

The train jolted to a stop when the engineer put the brakes on.

joker in the pack

- someone or something that is likely to change a situation in an unexpected way (the joker is one of the cards in a deck of cards that can be used as any card that you want in some games)

The small company was almost bankrupt. However, their new product was the joker in the pack that could save their business.

jot (something) down or jot down (something)

- to write something down quickly

I usually jot down telephone numbers in my notebook.

judge (someone or something) on its own merits

- to judge or evaluate someone or something on its own good points and achievements

Our company always judges each employee on his or her own merits.

judging by (something)

- considering something

Judging by the weather, I do not think that we will be able to go to the festival today.

jump Idioms

jump all over (someone)

- to criticize or scold or blame someone

My boss jumped all over me when I began to talk about my plans for the summer.

jump at (something)

- to seize the opportunity to do something

I jumped at the chance to go to France on company business.

jump bail

- to run away and fail to come to trial and therefore give up the money that you have already paid to the court

The man jumped bail and went to live in a foreign country.

jump down (someone's) throat

- to criticize or become angry with someone

When I reached the office my boss jumped down my throat for being late.

jump off the deep end

- to take immediate and drastic action

It is time for me to jump off the deep end and quit my job and go back to school.

jump off the shelves

- to sell very well

The new children's toy is jumping off the shelves.

jump on (someone)

- to scold or criticize or blame someone

Everybody jumped on the supervisor because they were angry about the new work schedules.

jump on the bandwagon

- to join a popular activity or campaign

Everybody jumped on the bandwagon to try and stop smoking in the workplace.

jump out of one's skin

- to be badly frightened

I nearly jumped out of my skin when I saw the man at the window.

jump the gun

- to start before you should

The man jumped the gun and began selling the tickets before he should have.

jump the track

- to jump off the rails (usually used for a train), to change suddenly from one thing to another

The train jumped the track near the edge of the town.

The whole project jumped the track and we had to stop it.

jump through a hoop

- to do whatever one is told to do, to go through a long process in order to do something

The man is always ready to jump through a hoop for his boss.

jump to conclusions

- to make a quick conclusion about something without thinking about it

"Please don't jump to conclusions about who broke the computer."

jumping-off place/point

- the starting place of a long trip, the start of something

We gathered early in the morning at the jumping-off place for our hike in the mountains.

junk-food junkie

- a person who likes junk food (unhealthy food such as candy and cookies and fast food)

The woman is a junk-food junkie and never eats healthy food.

the jury is still out (on someone or something)

- not decided about something

For myself, the jury is still out on whether or not I should look for a new job.

just Idioms

just about

- nearly, almost

I waited just about one hour before the concert started.

just in case (something happens)

- if something happens

I plan to take my umbrella just in case it rains today.

just now

- this very moment, almost at this moment

The accident happened just now. The police have not even arrived yet.

just one of those things

- something that you really cannot do anything about

The fact that I failed the driver's test is just one of those things and there is nothing that I can do about it.

just so

- done with great care, done very carefully

My mother always makes sure that her hair is just so before she goes out.

just the same

- nevertheless

I told my friend not to come early but just the same she came early anyway.

just what the doctor ordered

- exactly what is needed or wanted

Having the extra day off from work is just what the doctor ordered and I can get many things done.

K

kangaroo court

- an illegal court formed by a group of people to settle a dispute among themselves

There was a kangaroo court in movie after the ranchers arrested the criminal.

Katie bar the door

- get ready for trouble, a desperate situation is at hand

The gang arrived at the hotel and were ready to come in and fight when the owner yelled, "Katie bar the door."

keel over

- to fall over and faint

Three members of the band keeled over because of the heat.

keel over

- to turn upside down, to tip over

The boat keeled over in the middle of the lake but everybody was safe.

keen on (someone or something)

- to be enthusiastic about someone or something

My girlfriend is keen on going to a movie this weekend.

keep Idioms

keep a civil tongue

- to speak decently and politely

The angry customer was asked to keep a civil tongue when talking with the sales clerk.

keep a close rein on (someone or something)

- to strictly watch and control someone or something

The mother was keeping a close rein on her child at the shopping center.

keep a close watch on (someone or something)

- to monitor or observe someone or something

The woman always keeps a close watch on her child when she is at the shopping center.

keep a close watch over (someone or something)

- to guard or care for someone or something

I kept a close watch over the soup while it was cooking.

keep a secret

- to not tell a secret to others

I am trying to keep a secret about my friend's boyfriend.

keep a stiff upper lip

- to be brave, to face trouble bravely

The storm victims tried hard to keep a stiff upper lip in the difficult situation.

keep a straight face

- to stop oneself from smiling or laughing

It was difficult to keep a straight face when the man fell off his chair.

keep a tight rein on (someone or something)

- to strictly watch and control someone or something

Our principal keeps a tight rein on what is being taught in the school.

keep abreast of (something)

- to keep informed about something

I read the newspaper so that I can keep abreast of current events.

keep after/at (someone)

- to remind someone over and over about something

I always have to keep after my friend to remember her homework.

keep an eye on (someone or something)

- to watch and take care of something (not just look at something)

"Will you keep an eye on the baby while I go to the store."

keep an eye out for (someone or something)

- to watch for the arrival or appearance of someone or something

I kept an eye out for a restaurant after I arrived in the small town.

keep at (something)

- to persist with something

My cousin has decided to keep at his studies and I am sure that he will succeed.

keep away from (someone or something)

- to stay at a distance from someone or something, to avoid the use of something

I told the child to keep away from the busy street.

The child was told to keep away from fire.

keep body and soul together

- to keep alive, to survive

It was very cold in the mountains but somehow the hiker was able to keep body and soul together and survived.

keep books

- to keep records of money gained and spent, to do the work of a bookkeeper

My first job was to keep books for a small company in my hometown.

keep company with (someone)

- to associate with or spend much time with someone

I like to keep company with my friends from university.

keep cool

- to stay calm

The police officers were trained to keep cool in difficult situations.

keep down (something) or keep (something) down

- to keep something from progressing or growing, to keep within limits, to control something

The students were told to keep down the noise as the other class was taking an exam.

keep from (doing something)

- to prevent or refrain from doing something

I love ice cream and could not keep from eating three bowls.

keep good time

- to work accurately (used for a clock or watch)

My watch has not been keeping good time lately.

keep harping on (something)

- to continue to talk or complain about something

The boy's father keeps harping on the fact that his son never does his homework.

keep house

- to look after a house or a household

The girl has been keeping house for her father while he is sick.

keep in touch (with someone)

- to talk or write to someone, to maintain contact with someone

I have always tried to keep in touch with my friends from high school.

keep late hours

- to stay up late, to stay out until very late

My friend keeps late hours now that he is working for the newspaper.

keep off (something)

- to stay off someone's land or other property

The students were asked to keep off the grass which was being replanted.

keep on an even keel

- to remain cool and calm

I was busy with my job and school but I tried hard to keep on an even keel and get everything done.

keep on (doing something)

- to continue doing something

The girl is careless and keeps on making the same mistakes over and over.

keep on one's toes

- to stay alert and watchful

I try to keep on my toes when the teacher may ask me a question.

keep one's chin up

- to be brave, to be determined

"Try and keep your chin up. Things will be better in the future."

keep one's cool

- to stay or remain calm

I tried to keep my cool during the argument with my neighbor.

keep one's distance from (someone or something)

- to maintain a certain distance from someone or something

The girl always keeps her distance from the other students in the class.

keep one's eye on the ball

- to be watchful and ready for something

"You should keep your eye on the ball or you will make a mistake."

keep one's eyes open

- to remain alert and watchful for someone or something

"Please keep your eyes open for a good place to eat so we can have lunch."

keep one's feet on the ground

- to remain firmly established

My friend lost his job but he is trying hard to keep his feet on the ground.

keep one's fingers crossed

- to wish for good results in something that one is doing

"Please keep your fingers crossed that I will pass my exam."

keep one's hand in (something)

- to retain some control of something

My uncle sold his business but he is still trying to keep his hand in some of its operations.

keep one's hands off (someone or something)

- to refrain from touching or handling someone or something

My aunt asked her nephew to keep his hands off her furniture.

keep one's head

- to stay calm when there is trouble or danger

The president is a very good leader and is able to keep his head during an emergency.

keep one's head above water

- to have the ability to pay one's bills

The man is having trouble keeping his head above water since his salary decreased.

keep one's mouth shut

- to be silent, to stay silent

I was very angry and told my friend to keep his mouth shut. Later, I had to apologize.

keep one's nose clean

- to stay out of trouble, to avoid trouble

The boy has been able to keep his nose clean since he moved to the new town.

keep one's nose out of (someone's) business

- to refrain from interfering in someone else's business

I try hard to keep my nose out of my friend's business.

keep one's nose to the grindstone

- to work very hard

My friend is keeping his nose to the grindstone recently and I have not had a chance to meet him.

keep one's opinions to oneself

- to not give your opinion about something (especially when you disagree with others)

I try to keep my opinions to myself when I talk to my father about the local government.

keep one's options open

- to decide against taking firm action now in favor of being able to choose later, to decide against making a decision or a choice now so that you can make it later

The boy wanted to keep his options open for next year so he took some extra classes at school.

keep one's own counsel

- to keep one's ideas and plans to oneself

Our boss always keeps his own counsel and never reveals his plans to anyone.

keep one's place

- to exhibit behavior suitable to one's position or place in life

The cleaning lady was told to keep her place when she complained about her working conditions.

keep one's shirt on

- to remain calm, to keep from losing one's temper or becoming too impatient

"Try and keep your shirt on! Everything will be fine in a few minutes."

keep one's wits about one

- to stay calm when there is trouble or danger

There was a fire in the building but the security guard was able to keep his wits about him and help everybody to safety.

keep one's word

- to fulfill or keep one's promise

The girl never keeps her word and will probably not come to the party as she said.

keep out of (somewhere) or keep (someone or something) out of (somewhere)

- to not enter somewhere, to not allow someone or something to enter somewhere

The dog had to keep out of the garden.

The woman tried to keep her child out of the swimming pool.

keep pace (with someone or something)

- to go as fast or go at the same rate as someone or something

It is difficult to keep pace with the other students but somehow I manage.

keep quiet

- to remain silent

"Could you please keep quiet and listen to the instructions."

keep (someone) company

- to sit and stay with someone (especially someone who is lonely or sick)

I stayed home last night so that I could keep my mother company.

keep (someone) from (doing something)

- to prevent someone from doing something

I tried hard to keep my friend from buying a new car.

keep (someone or something) in check

- to keep someone or something under control, to restrain someone or something

The economic policy was designed to keep inflation in check.

keep (someone) in line

- to make someone behave properly

The teacher is very strict and she knows how to keep her students in line.

keep (someone or something) in mind

- to remember and think about someone or something

I told my coworkers to keep the new starting time for work in mind.

keep (someone) in stitches

- to cause someone to laugh continuously

My uncle kept me in stitches with his funny stories.

keep (someone) on or keep on (someone)

- to allow someone to continue working for you

We have too many workers but we will keep everybody on until business improves.

keep (someone) on tenterhooks

- to keep someone anxious or in suspense

I was kept on tenterhooks as I waited to hear the results of my exam.

keep (someone) posted

- to keep someone informed or up-to-date about something

I asked my friend to keep me posted about his new job and address.

keep (someone or something) still/quiet

- to make someone or something silent or less noisy

The mother had a hard time keeping her child still in the airplane.

keep (someone) up or keep up (someone)

- to prevent someone from going to bed

My neighbors kept me up last night with their loud music.

keep (something) down or keep down (something)

- to keep food in one's stomach (without vomiting it up when sick)

The child was sick and found it difficult to keep his food down.

keep (something) to oneself

- to keep something a secret

I asked my friend to keep the news to herself.

keep (something) under one's hat

- to keep a secret, to not tell something

My coworker will not say where he is going for his holiday. He wants to keep it under his hat.

keep (something) under wraps

- to keep something concealed (until some future date)

We plan to keep our plans for the new project under wraps.

keep still

- to not move

I tried to keep still during the long lecture.

keep tabs on (someone or something)

- to watch or check or observe someone or something

We are keeping tabs on the spending of the sales department.

keep the ball rolling

- to continue an activity or action, to not allow something that is happening to slow or stop

We must keep the ball rolling and get our work done now.

keep the home fires burning

- to keep things going as usual while someone is away

"Don't worry about anything. I will stay home and keep the home fires burning while you are on your holiday."

keep the lid on (something)

- to restrain something, to keep something quiet

The hospital worked hard to keep the lid on the drug scandal.

keep the wolf from the door

- to maintain oneself at a basic level

My job pays just enough money to keep the wolf from the door.

keep the wolves at bay

- to fight against some kind of trouble

The university students were angry and the administration had to work hard to keep the wolves at bay.

keep time

- to keep track of the time in a game or athletic contest

I kept time during the football game at our high school.

keep time

- to keep the beat, to keep the same musical rhythm

It is difficult for the girl to keep time when she is playing in the band.

keep time

- to keep accurate time (used for a watch or clock)

My old watch will not keep time at all.

keep to oneself

- to stay away from other people

Our neighbor is very quiet and likes to keep to herself.

keep track of (someone or something)

- to maintain a record of something

"Please carefully keep track of your expenses during the trip."

keep up

- to not stop, to continue

We are working hard to keep up the same level of production as last year.

keep up an act

- to act in a way that is different from one's natural behavior

The woman is trying to keep up an act even though she has almost no money.

keep up appearances

- to keep an outward show of prosperity or good behavior

The man is trying to keep up appearances even though he has lost his job.

keep up (something)

- to keep something in good condition, to maintain something

The man spends a lot of time trying to keep up the garden of his house.

keep up with (someone or something)

- to go at the same speed as a person or thing, to maintain the same rate of progress as someone or something

It is difficult for the boy to keep up with the rest of the class.

keep up with the Joneses

- to try to be the same as your neighbors (usually in matters related to money)

The man always worries about keeping up with the Joneses and he is always frustrated.

keep up with the news

- to keep informed

I read the newspaper every morning in order to keep up with the news.

keep up with the times

- to stay in fashion

My aunt tries very hard to keep up with the times.

(a fine) kettle of fish

- a situation that is not satisfactory, a mess

"This is a fine kettle of fish. What will we do with no water in our house."

keyed up

- to be excited, to be nervous

I was keyed up after we won the game and I could not go to sleep easily.

kick Idioms

kick a habit

- to break or stop a bad habit

The man used to smoke but he was able to kick the habit.

kick around

- to lie around and do nothing, to only do small tasks

I was tired on Saturday so I kicked around the house all morning.

kick around (someone) or kick (someone) around

- to treat someone badly, to act roughly or badly to someone or something

I do not like the supervisor very much because she is always kicking around the employees.

kick back

- to relax and not do much

I am going to kick back this evening and watch television.

kick in some money for (something) or kick some money in for (something)

- to contribute some money for something

Everybody kicked in some money for a present for our teacher.

kick off (something) or kick (something) off

- to begin something, to launch something, to start something

The department store kicked off their summer sale early Saturday morning.

a kick-off

- a start

The kick-off for the no smoking campaign will start next week.

kick oneself

- to regret something

I kicked myself for not applying for the job sooner.

kick out (someone) or kick (someone) out

- to make someone go or leave, to dismiss someone

The school kicked out the boy because of his bad behavior.

kick over

- to start (used for a motor)

At first, the engine would not start but finally it kicked over.

kick (something) around or kick around (something)

- to discuss or consider something informally

We kicked the idea around for several hours before we abandoned it.

kick the bucket

- to die

The man who used to clean the building kicked the bucket last week.

kick up a fuss/storm

- to make trouble, to be a nuisance about something

My boss kicked up a fuss when I told him about the accident.

kick up one's heels

- to have a good time, to celebrate

We kicked up our heels at the farewell party for our boss.

a kickback

- money paid illegally for favorable treatment

The construction company gave the politician a kickback in order to win the contract.

kid around (with someone)

- to tease and joke with someone

The students were kidding around with the teacher after the class.

kid's stuff

- a very easy task

It was kid's stuff. We were able to fix the stove easily.

kill off (something) or kill (something) off

- to kill or end something completely, to destroy something completely

The pollution in the river has killed off the fish.

kill the fatted calf

- to prepare a big feast (in someone's honor)

We decided to kill the fatted calf and have a big dinner for my uncle.

kill the goose that lays the golden egg

- to spoil something that is good or something that one has by being greedy

The man's job was very good and the salary was high but he quit the job because he wanted more money. He killed the goose that lays the golden egg.

kill time

- to waste time

We had to kill time before the movie started.

kill two birds with one stone

- to accomplish two things with one action

I was able to kill two birds with one stone by going to the meeting.

killed outright

- to be killed immediately

The man was killed outright when the truck hit him on the street.

kind of

- moderately, somewhat, more or less

I was kind of tired when I arrived home last night.

kink in one's neck

- a cramp in one's neck that causes pain

I woke up this morning with a kink in my neck.

kiss and make up

- to forgive someone and become friends again

I want to kiss and make up with my friend after our argument.

kiss and tell

- to participate in something private and then tell others about it

I do not trust the girl because she is the kind of person who will kiss and tell.

kiss of death

- an act that puts an end to someone or something

It was the kiss of death for the conversation with the teacher when the student learned that the teacher knew her father.

kiss (something) good-bye

- to lose something

"You can kiss your computer good-bye. It is totally destroyed."

kiss up to (someone)

- to flatter someone in the hope of getting a benefit or reward or a promotion

One of our co-workers always likes to kiss up to our supervisor.

kit and caboodle

- the entire amount of something, everything

I took the whole kit and caboodle of my fishing supplies when I went fishing.

kith and kin

- friends and relatives

All of our kith and kin attended the anniversary for my parents.

knee-high to a grasshopper

- very young (usually used for a child)

I learned to ride a bicycle when I was knee-high to a grasshopper.

knit one's brow

- to wrinkle one's brow by frowning

The teacher knit his brow and looked sternly at the child.

knock Idioms

knock about

- to travel without a plan, to go where one pleases

We decided to go to Brazil and knock about for a couple of months.

knock down the price of (something) or knock the price of (something) down

- to lower the price of something

I bargained hard so that I could knock down the price of the DVD player.

a knock-down-drag-out fight

- a serious fight or argument

My friend and his brother had a knock-down-drag-out fight last evening.

Knock it off!

- Stop doing something., Quit doing something.

"Please knock it off! You will hurt yourself if you are not careful."

knock off work (early)

- to quit work (for the day)

We knocked off work early so that we could go to the soccer game.

knock on doors

- to look for a job

I have been knocking on doors all month to look for a job.

knock on wood

- to knock on something made of wood to keep from having bad luck

I do not think that I will lose my job - knock on wood.

knock one's head against a (brick) wall

- to waste time trying to do something with no success

The company manager's have been knocking their heads against a wall trying to solve the problem.

knock oneself out (doing something)

- to make a great effort doing something

We knocked ourselves out trying to make the party successful.

knock (some) heads together

- to scold some people

The coach decided to knock some heads together in order to improve the team.

knock (someone) around or knock around (someone)

- to mistreat someone

The boy was sent home from school for knocking around another member of the class.

knock (someone) dead

- to put on a stunning performance for someone

The performance of the jazz group knocked the audience dead.

knock (someone) down to size

- to make a person more humble

The fact that the golfer lost the tournament helped to knock him down to size.

knock (someone) off or knock off (someone)

- to murder someone

A robber knocked off the owner of the shop last week.

knock (someone) off his or her feet

- to surprise or shock someone so much that he does not know what to do

When they announced that I had won the prize it knocked me off my feet.

knock (someone or something) out or knock out (someone or something)

- to make someone unconscious, to make something unworkable or unusable

The storm last night knocked out power in most of the town.

knock (someone) over with a feather

- to surprise someone by something extraordinary

It could have knocked me over with a feather when I saw my friend on TV.

knock (someone's) block off or knock off (someone's) block

- to hit someone very hard (in the head), to beat someone up

The man was very angry and threatened to knock the block off anyone who came near him.

knock (something) back/down

- to drink something (usually alcohol or medicine)

The medicine tasted terrible but I was able to knock it down.

knock (something) off or knock off (something)

- to finish something, to do something, to make something (often in haste or carelessly)

The small furniture company is able to knock off tables very fast.

knock the props out from under (someone)

- to destroy someone's confidence, to destroy someone's emotional or financial or moral base

The teacher knocked the props out from under the student when she criticized the student's work.

a knockout

- a very beautiful woman

The man said that the woman who he saw at the bus stop was a knockout.

know Idioms**know a thing or two (about someone or something)**

- to be well informed about someone or something

My father works in a software company and he knows a thing or two about computers.

know a trick or two

- to know some special ways of dealing with a problem

I know a trick or two about how to handle a customer who is angry or upset.

know all the tricks of the trade

- to possess the skills and knowledge necessary to do something

My cousin knows all the tricks of the trade and is a very good plumber.

know better than (to do something)

- to be smart enough not to do something

I told my friend that she should know better than to phone me at 7:00 AM on a Saturday morning.

know-how

- knowledge and skill

Our new boss has much know-how about how to operate a business.

(not) know if one is coming or going

- to not know what to do

The new sales manager does not know if he is coming or going.

know-it-all

- a person who acts as if he or she knows everything

The librarian is a know-it-all and nobody likes to be around him.

know of (someone or something)

- to be aware of someone or something, to have heard of someone or something

I do not know of any good restaurants near my house.

know one's ABCs

- to know the most basic things about something

The woman in the bank knows her ABCs and can provide the information that we need.

know one's place

- to know the behavior suitable to one's position in life

The boy does not know his place and often speaks out when he should not.

know one's stuff

- to know about something well

The man knows his stuff and is a very good plumber.

know one's way around/about

- to know how to get something done, to know about something

My friend knows his way around the city very well.

know (someone or something) by sight

- to know the name and recognize the face of someone or something

I know the professor's name but I do not know him by sight.

know (someone or something) like a book

- to know someone or something very well

I know the personality of my friend like a book.

know (someone or something) like an open book

- to know someone or something very well

I know the man like an open book.

know (someone or something) like the back of one's hand

- to know someone or something very well

I know the material for the exam like the back of my hand.

know (something) backwards and forwards

- to know something very well

I know the names of the people in my history class backwards and forwards.

know (something) by heart

- to know something perfectly and from memory

I know the poem by heart.

know (something) from memory

- to know something well from seeing it often

I know most of the telephone numbers from memory.

know (something) inside out

- to know something thoroughly

I know the history of our city inside out.

know (something) is coming

- to know in advance that something is going to happen

I knew it was coming when my boss told me that the store would soon close.

know (something) only too well

- to know something very well

I know only too well what will happen if I do not finish my essay on time.

(not) know the first thing about something

- to lack basic knowledge about something

The man does not know the first thing about computers.

know the ropes

- to know the procedures in a company, to know how to do something

I know the ropes at my job and I do very well at work.

know the score

- to know the facts (about life or something)

The man does not know the score about what is happening at his company.

know what's what

- to know the facts about something

It is difficult to know what's what with the man's problem.

know when one is not wanted

- to sense when one's presence is not welcome

I know when I am not wanted so I will not go to the restaurant.

know where (someone) stands on (something)

- to know what someone thinks or feels about someone or something

I do not know where the mayor stands on the issue of the new parking fees.

know which is which

- to be able to distinguish one thing or person from another

The two dogs look the same and I do not know which is which.

know which side one's bread is buttered on

- to know who can help you and therefore try to please him or her, to know what is good for oneself

The man is careful not to make his boss angry. He knows which side his bread is buttered on.

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a known fact

- something that is generally recognized as a fact

It is a known fact that more people get colds in the winter than in the summer.

a known quantity

- someone or something that is known and understood

The new employee is a known quantity in our office because he worked here before.

knuckle down (to something)

- to begin to work earnestly

I think it is time that we knuckle down and finish the project.

knuckle under

- to yield, to submit

The union finally knuckled under from the pressure and ended the strike.

L**labor of love**

- something done for personal pleasure and not for money

The man's painting is a labor of love and he does not expect to make any money from it.

lace into (someone)

- to attack or scold someone

The mother laced into her son when he came home late from the movie.

lace into (something)

- to eat food, to devour food

We laced into our dinner when we got home.

lady killer

- a man who some women find very charming and attractive

The man in the movie was a lady killer and women loved him.

lady's man

- a man who is popular with women

Our boss is a lady's man and he always seems to have a woman interested in him.

laid-back

- relaxed, not worried by things

Our teacher is very laid-back about most things in our classroom.

laid up

- to be confined to bed, to be unfit for work

My friend has been laid up for a few days because of a cold.

lame duck

- a public official who has a short time left to serve in office and therefore has less power than before

The mayor is a lame-duck leader so it is difficult for him to accomplish some things.

land a job

- to obtain a job

My best friend landed a very good job last month.

land an account

- to acquire an account

The salesman landed a large account on his first day of work.

land of Nod

- sleep

I entered the land of Nod as soon as my head hit the pillow.

land on both feet

- to come out of a bad situation successfully

The man landed on both feet after his business went bankrupt.

land on one's feet

- to come out of a bad situation successfully

My friend always manages to land on his feet no matter how difficult the situation is.

land up (somewhere or in some situation)

- to arrive at a final point, to finally be or do something
We landed up in a small town when we got lost driving.

landslide victory

- a very big victory (usually in an election)

My favorite candidate won a landslide victory in the election.

lap up (something) or lap (something) up

- to eat or drink something with the tongue (as a dog or cat would)

The dog lapped up the milk that his owner gave him.

lap up (something) or lap (something) up

- to eagerly take in or accept some information or praise

The man lapped up the praise that his boss gave him for the recently completed project.

lapse into a coma

- to go into a coma

The woman lapsed into a coma soon after the accident.

lash out (at someone)

- to attack someone with words

They were walking along the beach when the girl suddenly lashed out in anger at her boyfriend.

lash out (at someone)

- to suddenly try to hit someone

The boy suddenly lashed out and hit the boy who was sitting beside him.

last but not least

- in the last place but not the least important

Last but not least the boy went to the front of the class to receive his report card.

last-ditch effort

- a final effort

The government made a last-ditch effort to prevent a strike by the teachers.

last person

- the most unlikely person to do something or to be seen somewhere

My friend is the last person that you would expect to see in a French restaurant.

last straw

- the last insult or mistake or problem that one can endure and which then causes some reaction

The fourth time that the girl came to work late was the last straw and we finally fired her.

last will and testament

- the latest version of one's will

After my grandfather's funeral my uncle read out his last will and testament.

last word

- the last remark in an argument, the final say in deciding something

The woman always expects to have the last word when she and her husband go shopping together.

late in life

- when one is older

Some very great painters never started painting until late in life.

late in the day

- far along in a project or activity

We received a new marketing plan but it was late in the day and we could not change our plans.

laugh all the way to the bank

- to make money in a way that other people think is impossible

I was laughing all the way to the bank with the money that I made from selling drinks at the sports stadium.

laugh off (something) or laugh (something) off

- to not take something seriously

The man laughed off the attempt by his boss to make him come to work early.

laugh out of the other side of one's mouth

- to change from being happy to being sad

My friend was laughing out of the other side of his mouth when he received a speeding ticket for driving too fast.

laugh (something) out of court

- to dismiss a legal case as being ridiculous

They laughed the case out of court when the woman tried to sue the dog's owner after the dog ate her flowers.

laugh up one's sleeve

- to laugh quietly to oneself

I was laughing up my sleeve when I learned that my friend would have to clean the bathroom at work.

launch a product

- to introduce a new product to consumers

The company will launch their new product next month.

launch forth (on something)

- to start out on something

Our boss launched forth on a long criticism of how we are doing our jobs.

a law unto oneself

- someone who makes one's own laws or rules

The city council member was a law unto herself until she had to quit because of a scandal.

lay Idioms

(not) lay a finger/hand on (someone)

- to not touch someone, to not do something to someone

The man was told by the police to not lay a finger on his wife again.

lay an egg

- to fail to win the interest or favor of an audience

The performance by the magician was terrible. He laid an egg with the audience.

lay away (something) or lay (something) away

- to save something

The couple are trying to lay away some money for their holiday next year.

lay down one's arms

- to stop fighting, to surrender

The soldiers had to lay down their arms and stop fighting.

lay down one's life (for someone or something)

- to sacrifice one's life for someone or something

The young man laid down his life trying to protect the property of his company.

lay down the law

- to tell someone what to do by using your power or influence

The new manager plans to lay down the law to the workers regarding long lunch breaks.

lay eyes on (someone or something)

- to see someone or something

I have never laid eyes on a more beautiful dog in my life.

lay hold of (something)

- to get possession of something

If I can lay hold of some tools I will help you fix your toilet.

lay in (something) or lay (something) in

- to store up a supply of something, to get and store something for future use

The farmer is trying to lay in as much food as possible before winter comes.

lay/light into (someone)

- to attack someone with words

When I got to work this morning my boss laid/lit into me about my poor sales performance last month.

lay/light into (something)

- to do or eat something with much energy and enthusiasm

I laid into the steak as soon as the waiter brought it to the table.

lay it on thick

- to praise someone too much

My friend began to lay it on thick when I told him about my new job.

lay low

- to hide, to keep out of sight for a period of time

The man decided to lay low until his friend forgot that he had damaged his car.

lay of the land

- the features of an area of land or of an organization

We checked the lay of the land before we put up our tent at the camping site.

lay off (someone) or lay (someone) off

- to stop bothering someone, to leave someone alone

The teacher told the students to lay off the new student.

lay off (something) or lay (something) off

- to stop using or taking something bad (alcohol or drugs or chocolate or cigarettes)

I was told by my doctor to lay off smoking or I will be sick in the future.

lay off (workers/staff) or lay (workers/staff) off

- to reduce the number of workers

Six hundred workers at the automobile factory were recently laid off.

lay one's cards on the table

- to let someone know one's position and feelings openly, to deal honestly with something

The employee decided to lay his cards on the table and tell his boss about the job offer from the other company.

lay one's hands on (someone)

- to do violence to someone, to harm or hurt someone

The man said that if he ever lays hands on the person who stole his car he will take him to the police.

lay one's hands on (something)

- to find something, to acquire something

If I can lay my hands on a laptop computer, I will give the presentation tonight.

lay out (money) or lay (money) out

- to spend or pay some money

My friend will have to lay out much money for his new apartment.

lay out (something) or lay (something) out

- to plan something

We will lay out our plan for the new building at the next meeting.

lay over

- to arrive somewhere and wait some time before continuing on a journey

We will have to lay over in London for nine hours before we continue on our trip.

lay (someone) to rest

- to bury someone

We laid my uncle to rest in a quiet ceremony last night.

lay (something) on (someone)

- to direct blame or guilt for something on someone

The company tried to lay the blame for the computer problems on the manager.

lay (something) on the line

- to speak directly and firmly about something

The librarian had to lay it on the line and tell everyone not to bring drinks into the library.

lay (something) on the table

- to present a matter for discussion

I decided not to lay the matter about our salary on the table during the meeting.

lay (something) to rest

- to put an end to a rumor, to finish dealing with a problem and forget about it

We want to lay to rest the rumors about the financial problems in the company.

lay the blame on (someone or something)

- to blame someone or something

We laid the blame on my friend for making us late for the concert.

lay the groundwork for (something)

- to build the foundation or basis of something, to do the basic work that will lead to future success

The new training program will lay the groundwork for the future success of the company.

lay up (a vessel) or lay (a vessel) up

- to take a vessel out of active service, to put a boat in a boat dock or a garage

The weather was getting cold so we decided to lay up our boat for the winter.

lay up (something) or lay (something) up

- to collect a supply of something, to save something for future use, to store something

We are planning to lay up some canned fruit for the winter.

lay waste (to something) or lay (something) to waste

- to destroy and leave something in ruins, to wreck something

The army laid waste to the enemy territory.

layaway plan

- a plan in which someone pays part of some money that is owed and then pays the rest later and the store keeps the item until the full price has been paid

I decided to buy the television set on the department store's layaway plan.

lead Idioms**lead a dog's life**

- to live a hard life, to work hard and be treated unkindly

My friend has been leading a dog's life since he started his new job.

lead off

- to begin, to start, to open

The golfer was the first to lead off in the tournament.

lead (someone) by the nose

- to have full control of someone, to make or persuade someone to do what you want

The man is not very aggressive and lets his boss lead him by the nose.

lead (someone) down the garden path

- to deceive someone

The young woman was leading her boyfriend down the garden path when she promised to marry him.

lead (someone) on

- to deceive someone, to mislead someone

The salesman tried to lead me on about the new product.

lead (someone) on a merry chase

- to lead someone on a chase with no purpose

The criminal led the police on a merry chase before they arrested him.

lead (someone) to believe (something)

- to imply something to someone

The salesman led me to believe that he could deliver the product next week.

lead (someone) to (do something)

- to cause someone to do something

The screams from the house led the police to believe that something terrible had happened.

lead/live the life of Riley

- to live an easy life of luxury, to live a pleasant life

My father has been leading the life of Riley since he retired from his job.

lead the way

- to go first and show others how to go somewhere, to guide someone

I had to lead the way because nobody knew where the new office was located.

lead time

- the time that is available to prepare for something

There was not much lead time to prepare for the advertising campaign.

lead up to (something)

- to prepare the way for something

The concerts in the park were leading up to the music festival.

leading question

- a question that suggests the kind of answer that you want to hear

The lawyer asked the man a leading question when he asked him about the money. The man did not know anything about the money.

leaf through (something)

- to look through a book or magazine or newspaper without reading it in detail

I leafed through several magazines in the doctor's office.

leak out (something) or leak (something) out

- to disclose special or secret information to the press

Somebody leaked out the information about the illegal donations to the press.

lean on (someone)

- to pressure someone by blackmail or threats of physical violence in order to make him or her do something

The gang tried to lean on the small shop owner to get him to sell his property.

lean over backwards to (do something or help someone)

- to do everything possible to do something or help someone

My cousin leaned over backwards to help my father when he was sick.

lean toward (doing something)

- to tend toward doing something

At the moment, we are leaning toward buying a laptop computer rather than a desktop computer.

leap to conclusions

- to decide something or reach a conclusion without having all the facts

Our teacher leaped to conclusions when she accused the boy of breaking the window.

learn (something) by heart

- to memorize something

I learned my library card number by heart.

learn (something) by rote

- to memorize something without thinking about what is being learned

The children learned the material by rote but they did not really understand it.

learn (something) from the bottom up

- to learn something from the beginning

The young man learned about the company from the bottom up before his father retired.

learn (something) the hard way

- to learn something that is difficult or unpleasant by one's own experience

The young man learned things the hard way when he went to jail for stealing the computer.

learn the ropes

- to learn how to do a job

The man is a new employee and is still learning the ropes.

learn to live with (something)

- to learn to adapt to something unpleasant or painful

My mother and father must learn to live with not having a supermarket close to them.

least of all

- the least, of smallest importance

I do not like any of the choices offered, least of all the one that we were forced to choose.

leave Idioms**leave a bad taste in (someone's) mouth**

- to leave a bad impression with someone, to make someone feel disgusted

The way that the company fired the workers left a bad taste in everyone's mouth.

leave a lot to be desired

- to be inadequate

The job performance of the new employee leaves a lot to be desired.

leave no stone unturned

- to try in every way to do something, to do everything possible

The police left no stone unturned when they were looking for the lost girl.

leave one to one's fate

- to abandon someone to whatever may happen

The tour was suddenly canceled and we were left to our fate in getting our money refunded.

leave one's mark on (someone or something)

- to affect the behavior and performance of another person or of something

The company president left his mark on the company for many years after he retired.

leave oneself wide open for (something)

- to fail to protect oneself from criticism or ridicule

The actions of the manager left him wide open for criticism from everybody in the company.

leave (someone) alone

- to not disturb someone

"Please leave me alone so I can finish this essay."

leave (someone or something) behind

- to leave someone or something somewhere

I left my coat behind at the restaurant.

leave (someone) flat

- to fail to entertain or stimulate someone, to leave someone with no money

My attempt at making a joke left everyone in the room flat.

leave (someone) for dead

- to abandon someone as being dead

The hiker was left for dead when the rescue group could not find him.

leave (someone) high and dry

- to leave someone in a difficult position

The employees were left high and dry when the company went out of business.

leave (someone) holding the bag

- to leave someone to take the blame for something

My friend left me holding the bag when he left the accident.

leave (someone or something) in (someone's) hands

- to give someone control of or responsibility for someone or something

I left the planning for the barbecue in my father's hands.

leave (someone) in peace

- to stop bothering someone

The woman was happy when her family left her in peace for several hours.

leave (someone) in the lurch

- to desert or leave someone alone and in trouble, to refuse to help or support someone

My coworker left me in the lurch when he did not help me as he had promised.

leave (someone) out in the cold

- to exclude someone

We made an effort not to leave my friend out in the cold when we were planning the birthday party.

leave (something) hanging (in the air)

- to leave something undecided or unsettled

Whether or not our boss will leave next year was left hanging in the air at the end of the meeting.

leave (something) on or leave on (something)

- to leave something running or operating

I always leave the lights on when I am working in the house.

leave (something) open

- to leave a date or time unscheduled

I will leave next Wednesday open so that I can meet my friend for lunch.

leave (something) out or leave out (something)

- to omit something

My friend told me about the accident but he left out some of the main points.

leave (something) to (someone)

- to make someone responsible for something, to leave someone in charge of something

I will leave the travel arrangements to my friend.

leave (something) up to (someone)

- to give the choice or decision about something to someone

We will leave the decision about the birthday party up to my friend.

leave well enough alone

- to be satisfied with something the way that it is

"You should leave well enough alone and be happy with your work schedule the way it is."

leave word with (someone)

- to leave a message with someone

I left word with my father to ask my mother to phone me tonight.

left at the gate

- to be abandoned (a horse that does not leave the starting gate during a race is said to be left at the gate)

Everyone at my office went to lunch without me. I was left at the gate.

left-handed compliment

- an ambiguous compliment interpreted as offensive

The man gave the girl a left-handed compliment when he said that her dyed hair looked nice.

leg man

- someone who performs messenger services, an errand boy

My friend is working as a leg man for the motion picture company.

(not have a) leg to stand on

- to not have a firm foundation of facts, to not have the facts to support one's claims

The woman does not have a leg to stand on with her excuses for not finishing her work.

leg work

- routine work (that often involves walking)

I was forced to do all of the leg work to prepare for the meeting.

lend an ear (to someone)

- to listen to someone

I was asked to lend an ear to my friend so he could tell me about his problems.

lend color to (something)

- to provide an interesting accompaniment for something

The music of the orchestra helped to lend color to the dance performance.

lend (oneself/itself) to (something)

- to be adaptable to something

The small hall does not lend itself to having a good musical performance.

lend (someone) a hand

- to give someone some help

I asked my friend to lend me a hand to move the furniture.

lend (something) to (something)

- to make something important, to make something believable

The new research lends significance to the new theory.

a leopard can't change its spots

- you cannot change someone's basic human nature or bad qualities

The manager wrote a letter of apology to the customer but a leopard can't change its spots. The manager has not changed and the letter does not mean anything.

less than pleased

- not pleased

My father was less than pleased when I returned his car late last night.

lesser (of the two)

- the smaller one of the two

We chose the lesser of the two cars when we went to the car rental agency.

lesser of two evils

- the less bad thing of two bad things

The voters had to choose the lesser of two evils when they voted for one of the two candidates for mayor.

let Idioms

let alone (something)

- to not mention something, to say nothing of something

I do not have enough money to go to a movie let alone go on a holiday.

let bygones be bygones

- to forget about problems that happened in the past

"We need to let bygones be bygones and forget about our past differences."

let down one's hair

- to relax, to act freely and naturally

Everybody at the party let down their hair and had a good time.

let down (something) or let (something) down

- to lengthen something, to make something longer

The woman wanted to let down her dress because it was too short.

let go of (something)

- to release something

I let go of my suitcase and it fell off the luggage rack.

let go with (something)

- to shout something out

The child let go with a loud scream when he saw the dog.

let grass grow under one's feet

- to be idle, to be lazy, to waste time

The musician is always working hard and never lets grass grow under his feet.

let it all hang out

- to let the truth be known, to be open about something

The girl decided to let it all hang out. She told her friend about her problems with her boyfriend.

let it go/lay

- to forget about something, to leave something alone

"You should let it go and stop worrying about what the woman did to you last year."

let it rip

- to let something go at full speed, to take off all restraints

I let it rip when I got on the motorcycle.

let off steam

- to get rid of your extra energy or strong feelings by doing some activity

The man was angry at first but now he has let off steam and has calmed down.

let on (something)

- to reveal something, to inform about something

"Please don't let on that you saw me at the movie last night."

let on

- to try to make people believe something, to pretend something

The man tried to let on that he did not want the job but actually he did.

let one's emotions show

- to be emotional (where it is not appropriate)

The mayor let his emotions show when his plan for the new stadium was defeated by the city council.

let oneself go

- to become less constrained

I went to the party and let myself go for the evening.

let oneself go

- to not take care of oneself

The woman has been letting herself go recently and does not even bother to comb her hair regularly

let out a rope

- to allow a rope to slip out little by little

We let out the rope as the boat left the shore.

let out (some kind of sound) or let (some kind of sound) out

- to make some kind of noise or sound

The girl let out a strange sound before running out of the house.

let out (someone) or let (someone) out

- to dismiss someone from a class or practice

The teacher let out the students because of the bad weather.

let out (something) or let (something) out

- to make clothes bigger or looser

I went to the tailor to ask him to let out my sports jacket.

let out (something) or let (something) out

- to allow something to go out or escape

I let out our dog this morning and he has not come home yet.

let out (something) or let (something) out

- to allow something to be known, to tell something

The company let out the details of the restructuring plan yesterday but we have not had time to talk about them yet.

let sleeping dogs lie

- to not make trouble if you do not have to

"You should let sleeping dogs lie and not begin to talk about past problems."

let (someone) down or let down (someone)

- to fail to do as well as expected, to disappoint someone

The boy let his parents down when he failed the university entrance exams.

let (someone) down easy

- to tell someone some disappointing news in a way that makes them feel good

I will talk to the secretary tomorrow and let her down easy about her not getting the promotion.

let (someone) go

- to discharge someone from a job, to fire someone

The company will let several hundred workers go in order to become profitable again.

let (someone) have it

- to hit someone hard, to scold someone angrily

One man let another man have it when they had a fight on the bus.

let (someone) have it with both barrels

- to attack someone verbally

The woman let her husband have it with both barrels when he came home late from work without phoning.

let (someone) in on (something)

- to tell someone a secret

We let our friend in on our plan to sell our apartment and buy a house.

let (someone) know (about something)

- to tell or inform someone about something

"Let me know when you are ready to go to the movie."

let (someone) off

- to permit someone to leave a car or train or boat or plane or other transportation

The train stopped at a small town and let the young woman off.

let (someone) off (easy)

- to release someone with little or no punishment

The judge let the man off easy because the man was sincere in his apology for his crime.

let (someone) off the hook

- to excuse someone from a penalty or a promise

My boss let me off the hook and I did not have to stay after work and help clean the office.

let (someone) walk away with (something)

- to let someone have something

The store let me walk away with the new computer for a very cheap price.

let (something) go

- to pay no attention to something, to neglect something

The girl is letting her appearance go since she lost her job.

let (something) go

- to allow something to pass, to do nothing about something

Although I was angry at my friend's remark I decided to let it go.

let (something) loose

- to set something free, to release something being held

We decided to let the injured bird loose in the park.

let (something) off or let off (something)

- to discharge a gun, to explode something, to release something

The children let off many firecrackers during the festival.

let (something) pass

- to let something go unnoticed or unchallenged

I did not like what my friend said to me but I decided to let it pass.

let (something) ride

- to continue a situation without changing it

We should forget about the recent problems at work and let the matter ride.

let (something) slide

- to neglect a duty, to ignore a situation

Recently, I have been very busy and I have let my work slide.

let (something) slide by

- to forget or miss an important time or date

I let my girlfriend's birthday slide by without noticing it.

let (something) slip by

- to forget or miss an important time or date

We let my parent's wedding anniversary slip by without doing anything.

let (something) slip (out)

- to tell a secret by accident

I let the date of the wedding slip out by mistake at the dinner party.

let the cat out of the bag

- to reveal a secret

"Don't let the cat out of the bag about the surprise party for our boss."

let the chance slip by

- to lose the opportunity for something

My coworker let the chance slip by to take a class about computers.

let the chips fall where they may

- to not worry about the results of your actions

I will not worry about whether the company will go bankrupt or not. I will let the chips fall where they may.

let things slide

- to ignore the things that one is supposed to do

Recently, I have let things slide and my apartment is very messy.

let up

- to become less or weaker, to become slower or stop

The rain let up around noon so we were able to go back outside.

let up on (someone or something)

- to stop working too hard, to take the pressure off someone or something

The man was told by his doctor to let up on his work schedule or he would become sick.

let well enough alone

- to leave things as they are

I decided to let well enough alone and not ask my supervisor for extra time off.

letter of the law

- the literal interpretation or the words of a law but not necessarily the intent of those who wrote the law

The lawyer always likes to follow the letter of the law.

level (something) at (someone)

- to direct something (a remark or criticism) at someone

My friend began to level criticism at her boss for some of the things that she thought were wrong in the company.

level playing field

- an environment where two groups/companies/countries are given an equal opportunity for something

The two companies have a level playing field to apply for the contract.

level with (someone)

- to be honest with someone

I tried to level with my friend and tell her what I thought about her new hairstyle.

levelheaded

- sensible, practical, showing good judgement

The woman who works with me is very levelheaded.

license to (do something)

- the permission or right or chance to do something

When my uncle got the contract to sell food at the stadium it was a license to print money.

lick of work

- not even a small amount of work (usually used in the negative)

The children did not do a lick of work when the teacher was away.

lick one's lips

- to show eagerness or pleasure about a future event

I began to lick my lips when I heard about the chance to go on the training course.

lick one's wounds

- to think about and reflect on something that has embarrassed you or caused you loss or disappointment

The politician went for a holiday in order to lick his wounds after he lost the election.

lick (someone's) boots

- to behave in a servile manner toward someone

Our boss wants everybody to lick his boots. That is why nobody likes him.

lick (something) into shape

- to transform or change something that is failing into something that works effectively

We are working hard to lick the failing business into shape.

lie/lay down on the job

- to do a job poorly or not at all

The workers decided to lie down on the job and nothing was finished when the supervisor arrived.

lie fallow

- to remain unused (a field or land lies fallow)

The farmer let the field lie fallow for one growing season.

lie in state

- to lie in a state of honor after death in an open coffin so that the public can see his or her body (usually used for a famous political leader)

The President lay in state after his death.

lie in wait

- to watch from hiding in order to attack or surprise someone

The police decided to lie in wait for the bank robbers to appear at the bank.

lie low

- to stay quietly out of sight, to try not to attract attention

"Our boss is angry so I think that you should lie low until he calms down."

lie through one's teeth

- to tell lies

The woman will lie through her teeth in order to get what she wants.

life of Riley

- an easy life of luxury, a pleasant life

My father has been living the life of Riley since he retired from his job last year.

life of the party

- a person who is lively and helps make a party fun and exciting

My friend is the life of the party and everybody loves to see her.

(not) lift a finger

- to not do anything to help anyone

The man is a nice person but he will not lift a finger to help anyone else.

(not) lift a hand

- to not do anything to help anyone

My neighbor would not lift a hand to help me move.

light into (someone)

- to scold someone

The woman lit into her child when he came home from school late.

light into (something)

- to devour or eat something

When we arrived home we wanted to light into our dinner immediately.

light out (for somewhere)

- to depart quickly for somewhere

We woke up early and prepared to light out for our first day of adventure.

light up

- to suddenly look pleased and happy

When I told my cousin about our holiday plans his face lit up.

like Idioms**like a bat out of hell**

- with great speed and force

The boy left the theater like a bat out of hell.

like a bolt out of the blue

- suddenly and without warning

It was like a bolt out of the blue when my father said that he will change jobs.

like a bump on a log

- unresponsive

The boy was sitting at his desk like a bump on a log.

like a fish out of water

- appearing to be completely out of place somewhere

I was like a fish out of water when I went to the party at the expensive restaurant.

like a house on fire

- rapidly and with much energy

We worked like a house on fire in order to finish our work before our vacation.

like a sitting duck

- unsuspecting and unaware

The robber was like a sitting duck when the police arrested him as he waited for his partner to leave the bank.

like a three-ring circus

- chaotic or exciting or busy

The shopping center was like a three-ring circus when we went shopping on Saturday afternoon.

like a ton of bricks

- strongly or forcefully, a surprise to someone

The news of the singer's death hit me like a ton of bricks.

like an open book

- someone or something that is easy to understand

Our boss is like an open book and it is easy to know what he is thinking about.

like crazy

- very fast, with great energy

The boy was running like crazy but still he could not catch his friend.

like father, like son

- a son usually acts like his father

"Like father, like son," the man said as he watched the boy playing baseball exactly like his father.

like greased lightning

- very fast

The horse ran out of the barn like greased lightning.

like hell

- with much effort and energy, never, not permissible

I had to run like hell this morning in order to catch the bus for work.

"Like hell, I am going to lend my friend more money."

like it or lump it

- to either accept something or forget about it

I offered the woman a fair price for the TV and told her that she could either like it or lump it.

Like it's such a big deal!

- It really isn't so important

"Like it's such a big deal!" the boy said when he told his friend about the lost book.

like lambs to the slaughter

- quietly doing something without realizing the danger or difficulties of the situation

Our basketball team went like lambs to the slaughter to meet the best team in the city.

like looking for a needle in a haystack

- engaged in a hopeless search

Looking for my house keys at the beach was like looking for a needle in a haystack.

like mad

- very fast, with great energy

I worked like mad but I was unable to finish the project before noon.

like nothing on earth

- very unusual

The performance by our neighbor was like nothing on earth and surprised everyone who saw it.

like one of the family

- like someone is a member of your family

My sister's friend is like one of the family and we invite her to come with us wherever we go.

like the cut of (someone's) jib

- to like someone (a jib is a type of sail that is found on some sailboats)

I like to work with the new accountant. I like the cut of his jib.

like to hear oneself talk

- to enjoy talking rather than listening to other people

My friend likes to hear herself talk and it is very tiring to be around her.

like two peas in a pod

- very close or intimate

My two friends from school are like two peas in a pod and are always together.

like water off a duck's back

- without effect, without changing one's feelings or opinion

My boss always criticizes my friend but he ignores it and the criticism is like water off a duck's back.

the likes of (someone)

- someone like the person who you are talking about

I do not enjoy spending time with the likes of my neighbor.

line of least resistance

- the easiest (but not always the best) way to do something

We took the line of least resistance and moved out of our apartment rather than have problems with the manager.

line one's own pockets

- to make money for oneself in a dishonest way

The local politician was lining his own pockets and did not win another election.

line up

- to take places in a line or formation, to stand one behind another

We had to line up in front of the movie theater for over one hour.

line up (someone with someone)

- to supply a person with a date or companion

We tried to line up my friend's sister with our friend but we were not successful.

line up (someone for something)

- to arrange or schedule someone for something

We were unable to line up a speaker for our meeting.

line up (something with something)

- to adjust two things correctly

The carpenter lined up the two pieces of wood before he nailed them together.

lion's share (of something)

- the larger share of something

I gave the lion's share of my CD collection to my neighbor.

lip service

- support shown by words only and not by action

The company paid lip service to the proposal but I do not think that they really support it.

listen to reason

- to yield to a reasonable argument

The woman would not listen to reason when she complained about the coat that she had bought.

litmus test

- a test that uses one single indicator to help make a decision (the scientific meaning of a litmus test is a test for basic chemical properties that uses litmus paper)

The new sales policy was a litmus test for how the new manager would manage the department.

a little bird told me

- something is learned from a mysterious or secret source

A little bird told me that I would get a nice present from my boyfriend next week.

a little bit

- a small amount

I only had a little bit of time so I could not talk to my mother.

little by little

- gradually

The man broke his leg while he was skiing but little by little it is getting better.

little frog in a big pond

- an unimportant person in a large group or organization

The manager transferred to the head office but now he is a little frog in a big pond and nobody knows him.

little pitchers have big ears

- little children often overhear things that they are not supposed to hear

"Little pitchers have big ears," the woman said when she saw her daughter listening as she talked to her husband.

live a life of (something)

- to have a life of a certain quality or style

My friend has been living a life of luxury since he won much money in the lottery.

live and learn

- to increase one's knowledge by experience

I will have to live and learn and try not to eat so much food.

live and let live

- to not interfere with other people's business or preferences

Our neighbor believes that one should live and let live and she never criticizes other people.

live beyond one's means

- to spend more money than one can afford

The couple have been living beyond their means and they are now in serious financial difficulty.

live by one's wits

- to survive by being clever

The boy lives by his wits and never has any problems in his life.

a live dog is better than a dead lion

- it is better to be a live coward than a dead hero (this is from Ecclesiastes in the Bible)

A live dog is better than a dead lion and I told my friend not to get into a fight with the angry man in the restaurant.

live down (something)

- to remove blame or distrust by good conduct, to cause something to be forgiven by not repeating it

Our supervisor is trying to live down his reputation of being a difficult person to work for.

live for the moment

- to live without planning for the future

The young man lives for the moment and has no money saved for the future.

live from hand to mouth

- to live on little money and in poor circumstances

The man is an artist and must live from hand to mouth because he has no money.

live happily ever after

- to live in happiness after a specific event

It was a very beautiful movie and in the end everybody lived happily ever after.

live high on/off the hog

- to live very luxuriously or comfortably

My friend has been living high on the hog since he won the money in the lottery.

live in

- to live at the place where one works

The young woman got a job where she could live in with a family with three children.

live in an ivory tower

- to be unaware of the realities of everyday life

The university professor lives in an ivory tower and does not seem to understand what is going on in the world.

live it up

- to spend money freely, to have a good time

The man likes to live it up every weekend when he gets paid.

live off the fat of the land

- to grow and eat one's own food

The early pioneers went to the mountain valley and were able to live off the fat of the land.

live on borrowed time

- to continue to live or operate longer than circumstances would suggest

My old car has been living on borrowed time for a long time now.

live out of a suitcase

- to stay away from your home while travelling with only the belongings in your suitcase
I dislike my job because I am often away from home and I must live out of a suitcase.

live (something) down or live down (something)

- to overcome the shame or embarrassment of something

It was difficult for the woman to live down the shame of stealing money from her job.

live through (something)

- to endure something

The people in the town lived through one of the worst disasters in many years.

live up to one's end of the bargain

- to do as you promised in a bargain

The young boy did not live up to his end of the bargain when he made no effort to finish his homework before watching television.

live up to (something)

- to act according to something, to fulfill expectations

The man is trying to live up to his reputation as a smart businessman.

live within one's means

- to spend no more money than one has

The young couple work hard to live within their means.

liven up (something) or liven (something) up

- to energize something, to make something more active

My friend arrived at the party and he soon livened things up.

the living end

- great, fantastic, the ultimate

My sister said that her new boyfriend was the living end.

loaded

- to have lots of money

My new boss is loaded.

load the dice

- to make an outcome highly probable, to predetermine a result, to put someone at a disadvantage through some prior actions

The large company seemed to load the dice against the small contracting firm.

lock horns with (someone)

- to get into an argument with someone

I locked horns with a woman who I work with when we had an argument last week.

lock (something) in or lock in (something)

- to make something (such as a rate of interest at a bank) permanent over a period of time

We locked in the mortgage of our house for five years because the interest rates were low.

lock, stock, and barrel

- everything

The small corner store went out of business and sold everything lock, stock, and barrel.

lock the barn door after the horse is stolen/gone

- to try to make something safe after it is too late

Trying to prevent a basement flood after the rains have started is like locking the barn door after the horse is stolen.

lock (something) up or lock up (something)

- to be assured of success

The candidate has already locked up the nomination for the next election.

long and the short of it

- all the facts, the whole story, a brief summing up of something

I phoned my friend and he told me the long and the short of why he got fired.

long face

- a sad look, a disappointed look

Our boss had a long face when he came into work this morning.

a long haul

- a long distance or trip

The man is a long-haul truck driver and he is always out of town working.

the long haul

- a long period of time during which work continues or something is done

My cousin has decided to stay here for the long haul and will not return to his home.

a long shot

- a bet or other risk taken though not likely to succeed

It was a long shot that my friend would get the job so he was very happy when he did get it.

look Idioms**look a gift horse in the mouth**

- to complain if a gift is not perfect

"Even if you don't like the present from your company you shouldn't complain. Remember, don't look a gift horse in the mouth."

look after (someone)

- to take care of someone, to watch someone, to supervise someone, to protect someone

My friend has been looking after her mother since her mother's recent illness.

look at (someone) cross-eyed

- to look at someone provocatively

The man in the bus looked at the other man cross-eyed and they seemed like they were going to have a fight.

look at the world through rose-colored glasses

- to see only the good things about something, to be too optimistic

I told my friend to be realistic and not to always look at the world through rose-colored glasses.

look back on (something)

- to remember something from one's past, to reminisce

The man looked back on his trip to India with many good memories.

look down on (someone or something)

- to regard someone or something with contempt or a feeling of superiority

My cousin looks down on the activities and life of small towns.

look down one's nose at (someone or something)

- to show your dislike of someone or something

The boy always looks down his nose at the other members of his class.

look for (something)

- to try to find something, to hunt or search for something

The woman has been looking for her credit card all morning.

look for (something to happen)

- to think or expect that something is likely to happen

They are looking for our manager to become the next sales director of the company.

look for trouble

- to do something that may cause trouble

The young men spend every Saturday evening looking for trouble.

look forward to (something)

- to anticipate something with pleasure

We have been looking forward to the concert for a long time.

look good on paper

- to appear to be a good plan (but in actual practice it may not be a good plan)

My supervisor's plan looks good on paper but in reality I do not think that it will be successful.

look high and low for (someone or something)

- to look carefully in every possible place for someone or something

We looked high and low for my grandmother's hearing aide but we could not find it.

look in on (someone)

- to go to see someone, to make a short visit to someone, to make a call on someone to see if he or she is doing well

"Could you please look in on the baby and see if she is sleeping."

look into (something)

- to investigate or check something

They have been looking into the cause of the accident for many months.

look like a million dollars

- to look well and prosperous, to appear healthy and happy

My uncle looked like a million dollars when I saw him at the party last weekend.

look like death warmed over

- to look very ill

The elderly man looked like death warmed over when he went to the hospital.

look like (something)

- to predict something

It looks like rain this evening.

look like something the cat dragged in

- to look very shabby or worn or dirty

My friend looked like something the cat dragged in when he arrived home from work last night.

look like the cat that ate/swallowed the canary

- to seem very self-satisfied, to look like you have just had some kind of success

The boy looked like the cat that ate the canary when he won the race.

look on

- to watch, to observe, to be a spectator

Many people looked on as the fire burned in the building.

look on (someone) as (something)

- to view or think of someone as something

Everybody in our neighborhood looks on my neighbor as someone to talk to if they have a problem.

look out

- to take care, to be careful, to be on guard

"Look out! There is a large truck coming down the highway."

look out for (someone)

- to provide protection and care for someone

"Please look out for my sister when she visits you this summer."

look out for (someone or something)

- to be alert or watchful for someone or something, to keep looking for someone or something

"Could you please look out for any old vinyl records that you may find."

look out on (something)

- to face something, to overlook something

Our hotel room looked out on a beautiful garden.

look over (something) or look (something) over

- to inspect or survey or examine something

"Please take some time to look over these documents before you sign them."

look (someone) in the eye/face

- to face someone directly

I looked the man in the eye when I asked him to move his car out of my way.

look the other way

- to ignore something

Our boss always looks the other way when his staff are one or two minutes late.

look through (something)

- to search through something, to examine something with one's eyes

I looked through my desk for my house keys.

look through (something)

- to see through something like a window

I looked through the window at the beautiful sunset.

look to (someone)

- to depend on someone, to go to someone for help

My friend looks to his mother for help when he has a problem.

look to (something)

- to attend to something, to take care of something

The woman is a wonderful nurse and spends much time looking to the needs of her patients.

look up (someone) or look (someone) up

- to seek and find someone

When I was in New York City I looked up my friend from university.

look up (something) or look (something) up

- to search for something in a dictionary or other book

I will look up my friend's name in the telephone book.

I looked up the word in the dictionary.

look up to (someone)

- to think of someone as a good example to copy, to respect someone

I look up to the president of our company and would like to copy him.

looking up

- to appear promising or optimistic, to be improving

Things are looking up in the job market recently.

loom large (on the horizon)

- to be coming as a possible problem or danger or threat

A large increase in transportation costs is looming large on the horizon.

loose ends

- details that are not settled, things that are not finished

I have many loose ends to deal with before I go on my holidays.

lord it over (someone)

- to act as the superior and master of someone, to be bossy over someone

The supervisor likes to lord it over the other members of the staff.

lose Idioms**lose face**

- to be embarrassed or ashamed by an error or failure, to lose dignity

Our boss lost face when his employees decided not to support him during the meeting.

lose ground

- to go backward, to become weaker, to not improve

The government has been losing ground in the fight against inflation.

lose heart

- to become discouraged

The girl has begun to lose heart in her effort to learn the piano.

lose one's cool

- to lose one's temper, to become angry

The saleswoman lost her cool during a meeting with the chief supplier.

lose one's grip

- to lose a secure grasp or hold of something

The rock climber lost his grip and fell off the side of the cliff.

lose one's grip

- to lose control of a situation

I think that our boss is losing his grip in his ability to control the workplace.

lose one's head (over someone or something)

- to become confused or overexcited about someone or something, to lose one's self-control

The young woman lost her head when she discovered that she had won the swimming competition.

The teenager is in love and seems to have lost his head.

lose one's marbles

- to go crazy or act irrationally

The man seems to have lost his marbles and does not make any sense at all.

lose one's shirt

- to lose a lot of money

I think that the man is going to lose his shirt on the new business venture.

lose one's temper

- to become angry

The mother lost her temper when the child broke the expensive dish.

lose one's touch (with someone or something)

- to lose one's ability to handle someone or something

I think that the horse trainer is losing her touch with the horses that she is training.

lose one's train of thought

- to forget what one was talking or thinking about

I lost my train of thought when I was talking on the telephone to my friend.

lose one's way

- to become lost

The first time that my aunt went to London she lost her way.

lose oneself (in something)

- to become deeply involved in something

The violin player loses herself in her music when she is giving a concert.

lose out on (something)

- to fail to get or take part in something

I lost out on a chance to go to Mexico City because I was too busy with other things.

lose out to (someone or something)

- to fail to win, to miss first place in a contest

Our team lost out to the other team in the soccer tournament.

lose sight of (something)

- to forget something, to fail to see something

"Don't lose sight of the reason that you are planning to take the class."

lose sleep over (someone or something)

- to worry about someone or something so that you cannot sleep

I have been losing sleep over my recent problems at work.

lose touch with (someone)

- to fail to keep in contact or communication with someone

I lost touch with the people who I worked with at my summer job.

lose track of (someone or something)

- to lose contact with someone or something

I have lost track of my friends from high school.

lose weight

- to decrease one's weight

I want to lose weight so I have stopped eating sweets.

lost-and-found

- a place that handles lost items that other people find

I went to the lost-and-found department at the train station to look for my umbrella.

lost and gone forever

- permanently lost

My father's pocket knife is lost and gone forever and we will never see it again.

a lost cause

- a hopeless matter

Trying to change the work habits of our secretary is a lost cause. She will never change.

lost in thought

- to be busy thinking

I was lost in thought when my friend phoned last night.

lost on (someone)

- to be wasted or have no effect on someone

My attempt at telling a joke was lost on my former girlfriend.

loud and clear

- clear and distinct

I could hear the announcement loud and clear.

a loudmouth

- a noisy talker, a boastful or foolish talker

The man is a loudmouth and nobody likes him.

louse up (something) or louse (something) up

- to throw something into confusion, to make a mess of something, to spoil something

The woman loused up her job interview and has no chance to get the job now.

lousy with (something)

- something has many or much of something, something is in abundance

The hotel room was lousy with cockroaches.

love at first sight

- love from the first time that two people see each other

It was love at first sight when the young man and woman met at the photography class.

love to hear oneself talk

- to enjoy talking rather than listening to other people

The man loves to hear himself talk and many people do not like him.

lovely weather for ducks

- rainy weather

"Lovely weather for ducks," I said when I met my neighbor walking in the rain.

lover's lane

- a hidden road or walkway where lovers walk or park their cars in the evening

After the movie we drove to the local lover's lane.

low man on the totem pole

- the least important person

I am the low man on the totem pole in our company and I have no power.

the lowdown

- the inside facts of a matter, the total truth

I met with the speaker after the presentation and he gave me the lowdown on the new computer system.

lower one's sights

- to set one's goals lower than they were, to accept something that is less than you were hoping for
My cousin did not graduate from university and will now have to lower his sights when he begins to look for a job.

lower one's voice

- to speak more softly

The usher in the movie theater asked me to lower my voice.

lower oneself to (some level)

- to bring oneself down to a lower level of behavior

I do not want to lower myself to the same level as the terrible supervisor.

lower the boom on (someone)

- to scold or punish someone severely

Our teacher lowered the boom on the students who were late with their homework.

luck out

- to suddenly get lucky even though it looks like you will not succeed

I lucked out with the concert tickets and was able to buy four of them.

one's lucky stars

- a certain star or planet which is thought to bring a person good luck and success in life

You can count your lucky stars that you do not have to work on a rainy day like today.

lull before the storm

- a quiet period just before a period of great activity or excitement

It was the lull before the storm when the school principal began to tell the students about the new policy.

lull (someone) into a false sense of security

- to make someone believe that all is well before attacking them

The residents of the small community were lulled into a false sense of security when there were no crimes for several years.

lull (someone) to sleep

- to cause someone to fall asleep

The mother spent a long time trying to lull her young baby to sleep.

lunatic fringe

- the more extreme members of a group

A small lunatic fringe of protesters caused many problems at the convention.

M**mad as a hatter**

- crazy

My neighbor is as mad as a hatter and we never know what she will do next.

mad as a hornet

- very angry

Our boss was as mad as a hornet when we saw him yesterday.

made for each other

- to be very well suited romantically with each other

The young couple are made for each other and seem to be very happy.

made to measure

- clothing that is made especially to fit the measurements of someone

When I was working in Hong Kong I purchased several suits that were made to measure.

made to order

- to be made or put together on request

My father decided to buy a new computer desk that was made to order.

maiden voyage

- the first voyage of a ship or boat

The maiden voyage of the new cruise ship was very popular.

main drag

- the most important street in a town

We spent Saturday evening driving up and down the main drag of the town.

make Idioms

make a bed

- to arrange the sheets and blankets of a bed neatly

My mother always told me to make my bed when I was a child.

make a beeline for (someone or something)

- to hurry directly toward someone or something

When I enter the cafeteria I always make a beeline for the dessert section.

make a big deal about (something)

- to exaggerate the seriousness of something

I wish that my friend would not make a big deal about every small problem.

make a break for (something/somewhere)

- to move or run quickly to something or somewhere

The audience made a break for the doors when the concert was over.

make a buck

- to make money

I am working hard trying to make a buck.

make a bundle/pile

- to make a lot of money

My father made a bundle on the stock market several years ago.

make a check out (to someone)

- to write a check to give to someone with his or her name on it

I made a check out to the animal hospital after they cared for our dog.

make a clean breast of (something)

- to confess something bad that you have done in order not to feel guilty or bad

The woman made a clean breast of things and tried to start over.

make a clean sweep of (something)

- to do or win something completely or thoroughly

The new political party made a clean sweep of the large cities during the election.

make a comeback

- to return to one's former (successful) career or situation

The boxer has been training very hard in his attempt to make a comeback.

make a concession

- to change your position in favor of the other person/side when you are negotiating

The union made a big concession in their negotiations with their company.

make a day of it

- to do something all day

We decided to make a day of it and spend the day at the beach.

make a dent in (something)

- to make progress doing something

We worked hard all day but we did not make a dent in the amount of work that we had to do.

make a difference

- to cause a change in a situation

It does not make a difference whether the supervisor comes to the meeting or not.

make a face (at someone)

- to make a strange face to ridicule someone

The little girl made a face at the boy in her class.

make a fast/quick buck

- to make money with little effort

The two men tried to make a fast buck during the construction boom.

make a fool out of (someone)

- to make someone look foolish

The secretary made a fool out of her boss when she criticized him at the meeting.

make a fuss (over someone or something)

- to worry about or make a bother about someone or something

My grandmother always makes a fuss over me when I visit her.

make a go of (something)

- to succeed at something, to produce good results

The man was never able to make a go of his business.

make a great show of (something)

- to do something in a showy way

The woman made a great show of telling everybody about her rich boyfriend.

make a hit

- to be successful

The chocolate cake made a hit at the party.

make a killing

- to make a large amount of money

The woman made a killing on the real estate market before she retired.

make a laughingstock of (someone)

- to do something that makes people laugh at someone

I made a laughingstock of myself when I dropped the plate of crackers at the party.

make a living

- to earn enough money to live

The man cannot make a living by only doing a part-time job.

make a long story short

- to bring a story to an end by omitting some details

I made a long story short and quickly finished my story about my holiday.

make a meal of (something)

- to eat one main dish or food as an entire meal

We were able to make a meal of the chicken that my mother gave us.

make a mistake

- to make an error

I made a mistake on the math test.

make a mountain out of a molehill

- to make a big problem out of a small problem

The man is making a mountain out of a molehill by worrying about his son's problem.

make a name for oneself

- to become well-known or famous

The man has made a name for himself in the field of computers.

make a night/evening of (doing something)

- to do something for the entire night or evening

We decided to stay home and make an evening of playing cards.

make a note of (something)

- to write something on a piece of paper

I made a note of the people that I will phone on the weekend.

make a nuisance of oneself

- to be a constant bother

I did not phone the apartment manager about the sink because I did not want to make a nuisance of myself.

make a pass at (someone)

- to make romantic advances to someone

The man was fired because he made a pass at one of the women who he works with.

make a pitch (for someone or something)

- to attempt to promote or sell or advance someone or something

The city made a pitch for more money to help build a new sports stadium.

make a play for (someone)

- to try to make someone romantically interested in you

I tried to make a play for a woman in my computer class.

make a point

- to state something important

The speaker used some examples to make a point during his speech.

make a point of (doing or saying something)

- to do or say something with a definite intention, to be sure to do something

I make a point of visiting my grandmother often.

make a practice of (something)

- to turn something into a habit

I make a practice of going to bed at 11:00 PM every evening.

make a reservation

- to reserve a seat in an airplane or restaurant etc.

I phoned the airline last night so that I could make a reservation.

make a run for it

- to dash for safety, to make a quick escape

I made a run for it when the class finished.

make a scene

- to make a public display or disturbance

The woman made a scene in the supermarket when she saw the liquid soap on the floor.

make a silk purse out of a sow's ear

- to create something valuable out of something of no value

You cannot make a silk purse out of a sow's ear and the woman is not a good singer and will probably never sing in the choir.

make a stink (about something)

- to make a major issue about something

The woman decided to make a stink about the broken DVD player that she had bought.

make an all-out effort

- to make a big effort

The police made an all-out effort to discover who had robbed the bank.

make an appearance

- to appear somewhere, to appear in a performance

The famous actor made an appearance at the party.

make an appointment (with someone)

- to schedule a meeting with someone

I made an appointment with my dentist to have my teeth checked.

make an entrance

- to arrive at a party just after it has begun in order to attract attention

The important guest made an entrance soon after the party had begun.

make an example of (someone)

- to punish someone as a warning to others

The teacher punished the student in order to make an example of him for the other students.

make an exception (for someone)

- to suspend a rule for someone in one particular instance

The security guard made an exception for me and allowed me to enter the parking lot after it was closed.

make an honest buck

- to make an honest living

The man has always made an honest buck with his work.

make an impression (on someone)

- to produce a strong or memorable effect on someone

The elderly man made an impression on me and I was sad when I heard that he had died.

make an issue of (something)

- to make something into an important matter

Our supervisor often tries to make an issue of something that is not important at all.

make allowances for (someone or something)

- to allow extra time for someone or something, to make excuses for someone or something

We must make allowances for the fact that the new employee is very slow.

make amends for (something)

- to do something to compensate for an error or injury or loss

I had to do some extra work to make amends for my mistake of last week.

make arrangements for (someone or something)

- to make plans for someone or something

We made arrangements for a small wedding for my cousin.

make as if (to do something)

- to act as if one were about to do something

The driver made as if he was going to turn right but he actually turned left.

make away with (something)

- to take or carry away something

The cat made away with the frozen fish that was on the kitchen counter.

make believe

- to act as if something is true although one knows that it is not true, to pretend

The children were playing make believe and pretended that they lived in a castle.

make big bucks

- to make a lot of money

My friend is making big bucks at his company.

make book on (something)

- to make or accept bets on something

The gamblers were planning to make book on the coming election.

make clear or make (something) clear

- to clarify something, to explain something

The teacher made clear to the children the rules of the class.

make cracks (about someone or something)

- to ridicule or make jokes about someone or something

The radio announcer made cracks about the famous athlete during the interview.

make do with (something)

- to substitute one thing for another thing, to manage, to cope

If there is no cream for the coffee then we will have to make do with milk.

make ends meet

- to be able to live on the money that one has

It is hard to make ends meet on the man's salary.

make eyes at (someone)

- to flirt with someone, to look at someone to try and attract him or her

The boy was making eyes at the girl in his history class.

make for (someone or somewhere)

- to go or start toward someone or somewhere

When it began to get dark we decided to make for a quiet place to camp.

make free with (someone or something)

- to take advantage or use something as if it were one's own

My roommate always makes free with my clothes.

make friends

- to form friendships with people or animals

The girl is shy and is not able to make friends easily.

make fun of (someone or something)

- to ridicule or make jokes about someone or something

The students like to make fun of the girl with the short hair.

make good

- to succeed

The man is working very hard to make good.

make good money

- to earn a large amount of money

My friend is able to make good money selling computer equipment in the evenings.

make good on (something)

- to fulfill a promise, to make something come true, to repay a debt

Our boss made good on his promise to give everyone a raise last year.

make good time

- to arrive at a destination in a short time or quicker than you expected

We made good time yesterday and arrived home before it became dark.

make hay while the sun shines

- to do something at the right time, to take advantage of an opportunity

We will make hay while the sun shines and paint the house while the weather is good.

(not) make head nor tail of (something)

- to not be able to understand something

We could not make head nor tail of what the man was saying during his speech.

make headway

- to make progress

We were not able to make any headway with the project.

make it

- to succeed

The woman worked hard and was able to make it in the publishing industry.

make it as far as

- to travel as far as somewhere, to endure something until you must stop

We made it as far as the city limits before our car began to have problems.

The book was very difficult to read. However, I made it as far as the third chapter.

make it hot for (someone)

- to make things difficult for someone

The questions from the reporter were making it hot for the city council member.

make it in (to work)

- to arrive at work

I was able to make it in early for work today.

make it one's business to (do something)

- to do something even if you may interfere in something that does not directly concern you

The mother always makes it her business to know exactly what her children are doing.

make it to first base

- to successfully take the first step with someone or when doing something (in baseball the first step around the bases to score is to get to first base)

I could not make it to first base in my attempt to have my boss change my work schedule.

make it up to (someone)

- to do something for someone in order to compensate for an unfulfilled promise or debt

I cannot help you tonight but I will make it up to you later.

make it worth (someone's) while to do (something)

- to make something profitable enough or beneficial enough for someone to do

Our company always makes it worth our while to work on Saturdays.

make life miserable for (someone)

- to make someone unhappy over a long period of time

The manager of the apartment building made life miserable for the young couple with the baby.

make light of (something)

- to treat something as not being important, to minimize something

My friend made light of my efforts to learn how to speak and write Chinese.

make little of (someone or something)

- to minimize someone or something, to belittle someone or something

My friend makes little of the fact that he often borrows money and then does not pay it back quickly.

make merry

- to have fun, to laugh and celebrate

We decided to go to a nice restaurant and make merry for the evening.

make mincemeat out of (someone)

- to beat someone up, to fight and hurt someone

The boxer made mincemeat out of his opponent during the boxing match.

make mischief

- to cause trouble

The young boy enjoyed the fact that he could make mischief whenever he wanted.

make money hand over fist

- to make money fast and in large amounts

My friend is making money hand over fist in his business.

make no bones about (something)

- to make no secret of something, to have no doubts about something

I made no bones about the fact that I am not interested in applying for the supervisor's job.

make no difference to (someone)

- to not matter to someone, to not care (about something)

It makes no difference to me if we go to the movie on Friday or on Saturday.

make no mistake (about something)

- to have no doubt about something, to be certain about something

I told the man to make no mistake about the fact that he is not permitted to park his car in our parking area.

make nothing of (something)

- to ignore something as if it had not happened

The woman made nothing of the fact that she almost hit a woman in the parking lot.

make of (someone or something)

- to think or have an opinion about someone or something

"What do you make of the new accounting manager?"

make off with (someone or something)

- to take someone or something away

The thief made off with a new television set from the store.

make one's bed and lie in it

- to be responsible for what you have done and accept the results of your actions

"You quit your job and now you have no money. You made your bed and now you must lie in it."

make one's blood boil

- to cause someone to become very angry

Every time that I see that man he makes my blood boil.

make one's feelings known

- to reveal one's feelings about something

My friend made her feelings known about her desire to not attend the dinner.

make one's hair stand on end

- to frighten or horrify someone

The horror movie made my hair stand on end.

make one's own way

- to rely on one's own abilities

The father wants his son to join the family business but the son wants to make his own way and do something different.

make oneself at home

- to relax and act as if you are at home

The woman always makes herself at home when she visits her friends.

make oneself conspicuous

- to attract attention to oneself

The man made himself conspicuous by wearing the colorful sports jacket.

make oneself felt

- to use one's authority

The supervisor was able to make himself felt when he helped to resolve the conflict.

make oneself heard

- to speak loudly so that you will be heard above the noise

I had to speak loudly in order to make myself heard while the loud music was playing.

make oneself scarce

- to leave quickly, to go away

I think that I will make myself scarce and go to the beach for the day.

make or break (someone)

- to either benefit or ruin someone

The new business venture will probably make or break my uncle.

make out

- to progress, to do well or not do well

"How did you make out at your job interview yesterday?"

make out (a report/application)

- to fill out a report or application

I worked late last night in order to make out a report for work.

make out (something)

- to understand something by making an effort

I can never make out what my friend wants to say when he phones me.

make out (something)

- to make someone believe something, to prove something

The man made out that he was at the library last night but I know that he was not.

make out (something) or make (something) out

- to distinguish or identify something, to manage to see or read something

The ship captain could not make out the name of the other boat because of the fog.

I was unable to make out the sign because I did not have my glasses.

make over (something) or make (something) over

- to make something look different, to change the style of something

We decided to make over our living room because we were tired of the old style.

make overtures to (someone)

- to approach someone in a friendly way in order to talk about something or deal with something, to make a formal proposal or offer

The woman made overtures to her friend to try and solve their recent problems.

make peace with (someone)

- to end a quarrel with someone

The two sisters were finally able to make peace with each other.

make points with (someone)

- to gain favor with someone

The woman is more interested in making points with her boss than doing a good job.

make room for (someone or something)

- to arrange space for someone or something

We made room for the new computer in the spare room.

make sense

- to seem reasonable, to be comprehensible, to be explained in a way that you understand

The new proposal really does make sense.

make sense of (something)

- to understand something, to interpret something successfully

I could not make sense of what the man was saying.

make sense out of (someone or something)

- to understand or interpret someone or something

We tried hard to make sense out of the tragedy at the hotel.

make short work of (something)

- to finish something quickly

I made short work of the first report and started to work on the other report.

make (someone or something) available to (someone)

- to supply someone with someone or something

The company made a car available to the salesman.

The company made a tour guide available to our group.

make (someone) eat crow

- to cause someone to admit an error or retract a statement

I want the supervisor to eat crow and admit that she made a mistake.

make (someone) look good

- to cause someone to appear successful or competent

The new sales contract that I won made me look good.

make (someone) look ridiculous

- to make someone look foolish

The complaint from my coworker made me look ridiculous.

make (someone) sick

- to disgust someone

The attitude of the woman next door makes me sick.

make (someone) tick

- to motivate someone to behave or act in a certain way

It is difficult to know what makes our boss tick.

make (someone's) blood run cold

- to shock or horrify someone

The sight of the injured family in the car accident made my blood run cold.

make (someone's) flesh crawl

- to cause someone's skin to feel funny

The movie was very violent and it made my flesh crawl.

make (someone's) hair stand on end

- to cause someone to be very frightened

The sound of the screaming woman made my hair stand on end.

make (someone's) head spin

- to make someone confused or overwhelmed, to make someone dizzy

The information that I had to learn in the accounting course made my head spin.

make (someone's) mouth water

- to make someone want to eat something because of the thought or smell of the food

It made my mouth water when I looked at the menu.

make (someone's) position clear

- to clarify where someone stands on an issue

The politician made his position clear on the issue of taxes.

make (something) - an event or meeting)

- to attend an event

I was feeling sick so I was not able to make the monthly meeting of our club.

I cannot make it tonight and will not be able to meet my friends.

make (something) by hand

- to make something with one's hands rather than with a machine

The people in the small village make most of their clothes by hand.

The woman likes to buy clothes that are made by hand.

make (something) from scratch

- to make something by starting with the basic ingredients

We made the soup from scratch.

make (something) out of nothing

- to make an issue out of something of little importance

My friend always wants to make something out of nothing and he fights with everyone.

make (something) right/good

- to replace or restore something

I worked hard to make my relationship with my friend right.

make (something) to order

- to make something only when someone requests it

The construction company makes many parts for their equipment to order.

make (something) up to (someone)

- to repay someone for something, to make amends to someone

I was late for work so I had to make it up to my boss by working late.

make (something) worth (someone's) while

- to make something profitable enough for someone to do

My friend helped me move. I made it worth his while by buying him dinner.

make sure

- to make certain, to establish something without a doubt

I want to make sure that my friend is going to meet me tomorrow.

make the best of (something)

- to do as well as possible in a bad situation

The man tried to make the best of the job that he hated.

make the grade

- to succeed, to qualify for something

The player was not able to make the grade and he could not join the football team.

make the most of (something)

- to use something to one's greatest advantage

The woman made the most of her time in Europe and visited many art galleries.

make the scene

- to be present, to go to a certain place or event

We decided to make the scene and go to the club for the evening.

make time for (someone or something)

- to schedule time to see someone or do something

The man makes time for his son every weekend so that they can play sports together.

make time with (someone)

- to flirt with someone

The man tried to make time with the waitress in the restaurant.

make up for lost time

- to do something quickly (because you wasted time before)

We had to make up for lost time after wasting several days before starting the project.

make up for (something)

- to compensate for a loss or mistake

We must work hard to make up for last year's poor sales.

make up one's face

- to put on cosmetics or makeup

The woman likes to make up her face before she goes to the store.

make up one's mind

- to decide something

I have not made up my mind about whether or not I will accept the new job.

make up (something)

- to form something, to compose something, to constitute something

The singing group is made up of five singers.

make up (something) or make (something) up

- to make something by putting things or parts together

We made up a nice lunch for the picnic.

A car is made up of many different parts.

make up (something - a story or an excuse)

- to invent a story, to think and say something that is not true

The girl made up a story about how she got lost in the mountains.

make up (something/money/time)

- to do or supply something that is lacking, to regain or repay something

I had to make up the time that I was sick by working on Saturday.

make up (with someone)

- to become friends again after a quarrel

The girl made up with her friend after they had a fight last week.

make use of (someone or something)

- to use someone or something

I made use of my friend's garage to keep some of my tools.

We made use of the carpenter to do some other work.

make waves

- to create a disturbance

The man is very quiet at work and does not like to make waves.

make way for (someone or something)

- to stand aside, to move so that someone or something can pass by

The truck moved to the side of the road to make way for the ambulance.

man-about-town

- a fashionable man who leads a sophisticated life

My friend is a man-about-town and goes out almost every evening.

man in the street

- an average or ordinary person

According to the man in the street the city government is not very popular.

man-to-man

- frank or honest, direct

I had a man-to-man talk with my friend about his recent problem.

many is the time

- on many occasions

Many is the time that I have sat at home waiting for a phone call that never came.

march to (the beat of) a different drummer

- to believe in a different set of principles than most other people

My friend marches to the beat of a different drummer although he does what he thinks is the right thing to do.

marching orders

- orders to move on or depart, orders for soldiers to march someplace

We had our marching orders and had to prepare to leave.

The soldiers had their marching orders and had to leave quickly.

mark Idioms**mark down (a price) or mark (a price) down**

- to lower the price of something

The store decided to mark down the prices of their winter coats.

mark down (something) or mark (something) down

- to make a note about something

The traffic policeman marked down all of the cars that were parked illegally.

mark my words

- remember what I am telling you

"Mark my words, if you do not finish your homework you are not going to go out this weekend."

mark time

- to wait for something to happen

My friend has been marking time for over a month now as he waits to hear about the new job.

mark time (to music)

- to move one's feet up and down to music

The man was marking time to the music as he was driving his car.

mark up (a price) or mark (a price) up

- to raise the price of something

The store marked up the price of the camping equipment at the beginning of the summer.

mark up (something) or mark (something) up

- to mess something up with marks

The child marked up the new table that her parents had just bought.

a marvel to behold

- someone or something that is quite wonderful or exciting to see

The new bridge is a marvel to behold and many tourists want to see it.

a match for (someone)

- equal to someone in a contest

The German soccer team was a match for the Brazilian team.

matter

- to be important

It does not matter if I come to work late tomorrow.

a matter of course

- the usual way or habit or rule

Everything was done as a matter of course and nobody thought about the results.

a matter of fact

- something that can be proved and is true

It was a matter of fact that no taxes were paid by the company last year.

a matter-of-fact manner/way

- a way of simply telling or showing the truth, a way that makes one seem not to care much

The witness described the murder in a matter-of-fact way.

as a matter of fact

- used to emphasize that something is true or actually happened

"As a matter of fact, I saw my friend last night and he asked me how you were."

a matter of life and death

- an issue of great urgency

It was a matter of life and death to rescue the young boy from the water quickly.

a matter of opinion

- a question about which there are different opinions

It was a matter of opinion as to what design would be best for the new art gallery.

mean business

- to be serious, to be ready to take action

Our boss is working very hard and means business when he says that he is going to get the office organized.

mean for (someone) to (do something)

- to intend for someone to do something

I mean for my friend to get the free ticket and not someone else.

mean nothing to (someone)

- to have no effect or feeling for someone

My uncle is very wealthy and to lose money in a business transaction means nothing to him.

mean (something) to (someone)

- to have an effect or feeling for someone

I always tell my mother about my job situation because it means a lot to her.

mean to (do something)

- to plan or intend to do something

I always mean to go to a movie but I never have enough time.

mean well

- to have good intentions, to try to be kind and helpful

Although the woman means well, she always seems to cause herself many problems.

means to an end

- a way or method of getting to an objective

The design project was a means to an end for my friend. It would later help him to apply for a different position in his company.

meant to be

- destined to exist or happen

It was not meant to be that I would win some money in the lottery.

measure up to (someone or something)

- to be equal to someone or something, to be of the same quality as someone or something

The new accounting manager does not measure up to the previous accounting manager.

meat and potatoes

- simple tastes in food and other things, basic and strong

My friend has a basic meat-and-potatoes approach to everything in life.

a Mecca for (something)

- a place that is popular with people for some reason (from the city of Mecca which is the religious center of Islam)

The area with many lakes is a Mecca for people who like to fish.

meet Idioms

meet one's end/death

- to die

The elderly man met his death in an accident while walking across the street.

meet one's match

- to meet one's equal

Our team met their match when they had to play the best team in the city.

meet one's Waterloo

- to meet one's final and most difficult or impossible challenge (Napoleon was defeated at Waterloo)

The team met their Waterloo when they went to the tournament to meet the best team in the country.

meet (someone) half-way

- to make a compromise with someone

The boy is very stubborn and is never willing to meet his friends half-way.

meet the requirements (for something)

- to fulfill the requirements for something

The new nurse does not meet the requirements to be a nurse in our hospital.

meet up with (someone or something)

- to meet someone or something by accident or without expecting to

The young man met up with a nice group of people while he was traveling in Australia.

a meeting of minds

- complete agreement

The members of our group had a meeting of minds and we all decided to go to a movie.

melt in one's mouth

- to taste very good, to taste delicious

The pastry that my grandmother made melted in my mouth.

mend fences with (someone)

- to do something to repair a relationship after a fight or other problem

I made an effort to mend fences with my friend after our recent fight.

mend one's ways

- to improve or change one's habits

The woman was forced to mend her ways in order to do better at work.

mention (someone or something) in passing

- to mention someone or something casually

I mentioned my friend in passing when I was talking to my father.

mess around/about

- to play around or engage in idle activity

The children were messing around in the school yard before school began.

mess up

- to cause trouble, to spoil something, to perform badly, to make a mistake

The employee messed up his chance to get a promotion by not making any effort during the year.

The girl messed up her piano piece.

middle of the road

- halfway between two different ideas, seeing good on both sides of an issue

The mayor was elected because his ideas were middle of the road.

might as well

- would prefer to do something, should maybe do something

"We might as well go home now. I don't think our friend will come."

a milestone in someone's life

- a very important event or point in one's life

The high school graduation ceremony was a milestone in the young woman's life.

milk of human kindness

- natural kindness and sympathy shown to others

The woman who volunteered at the hospital was full of the milk of human kindness.

milk (someone) for (something)

- to pressure someone into giving information or money

The boy was milking his friend for as much money as he could.

a millstone around (someone's) neck

- a continual burden or handicap for someone

The empty store was a millstone around the neck of the small businessman.

mince (one's) words

- to make one's statement weaker by choosing weak or polite words

I tried not to mince my words when I asked my neighbor to keep quiet.

mind one's manners

- to be careful to use good manners

The parents told their child to mind his manners.

mind one's own business

- to attend only to the things that concern one, to keep to one's own business and not be concerned about the business of others

I asked my friend to mind his own business when he asked me about my problems with my father.

mind one's P's and Q's

- to be very careful about what one does or says

I must mind my P's and Q's and not say anything to offend my aunt.

mind the store

- to be responsible for an office or house while others are gone

My sister stayed home to mind the store when the rest of the family went away for the weekend.

Mind you

- I want you to notice and understand something

I do not want to work any more extra hours. Mind you, if there is an emergency, I will be happy to work extra hours.

a mine of information

- a person or something that is full of information

The old man was a mine of information when we were writing about the history of the town.

a miscarriage of justice

- a wrong or mistaken decision (in a court of law)

Everybody thought that the light sentence that the murderer received was a miscarriage of justice.

misplace one's trust in (someone)

- to put trust in someone who does not deserve it

The company misplaced their trust in the manager who caused them many legal problems.

miss by a mile

- fail to do something by a great amount, to fail to hit something by a great distance

The soccer player seemed almost certain to score a goal but actually he missed by a mile.

miss out on (something)

- to lose an opportunity

The man missed out on the new job because he was late for the interview.

miss the boat

- to lose an opportunity

I must hurry and get my application in or I will miss the boat and not get the job.

miss the point

- to fail to understand the important part of something

My friend is missing the point when we try to explain why he should not do what he is doing.

mistake (someone or something) for (someone or something) else

- to think that someone or something is someone or something else

I mistook my friend's sister for someone else when I went to the airport.

I often mistake one car for another car when I see them on the street.

mix and match

- to assemble a limited number of items (often clothing) in a number of different ways

There was a sale at the department store where we could mix and match the various summer outfits.

mix it up

- to argue or fight

The two groups of young men were mixing it up outside the school yard.

mix up (something) or mix (something) up

- to confuse things, to make a mistake about something

The teacher mixed up the DVDs and played the wrong one for the class.

a mix-up

- an error, confusion

There was a mix-up at the airline ticket counter and I was given the wrong ticket.

a mixed bag

- a varied collection of people or things

The festival promoters presented a mixed bag of musical styles at the music festival.

mixed up

- to be confused

The boy gets mixed up when he tries to speak French.

moment of truth

- the point where someone has to face the reality of a situation

The moment of truth for the runner came when the qualifying races for the Olympics began.

Money is no object

- the cost of something is not important

Money is no object and we have decided to go on a luxury cruise this summer.

Money is the root of all evil

- money is the basic cause of all wrongdoing

Many people believe that money is the root of all evil and causes most problems in the world.

Money talks

- money gives one power and influence

Money talks and whenever the wealthy banker goes to his favorite restaurant, he gets the best table available.

money to burn

- much money, more money than is needed

My friend has money to burn and never has to worry about working.

monkey around (with someone or something)

- to play with or waste time with someone or something

I spent the morning monkeying around with my new computer.

monkey business

- mischief

The kids were involved in some monkey business when the window broke.

monkey business

- unethical or illegal activity, cheating

The company was involved in some monkey business with the tax department.

mop the floor with (someone)

- to beat up someone

The large man mopped the floor with the young man.

mope around

- to move around in a depressed state

The boy was forced to stay home so he spent the morning moping around the house.

more Idioms

more and more

- increasingly, an increasing number

More and more people are buying laptop computers.

more dead than alive

- exhausted, near death

I felt more dead than alive when I returned from the hiking trip.

more fun than a barrel of monkeys

- very funny, much fun

My uncle is more fun than a barrel of monkeys and we love to visit him.

more often than not

- usually

More often than not, we eat at home rather than go out.

more or less

- approximately, almost, somewhat, to some extent

I have more or less decided to study business next year.

more (something) than one can shake a stick at

- a lot, too many to count

There are more ants than you can shake a stick at in the kitchen.

more than one can bear/stand/take

- more trouble or other misfortune than one can endure

The constant barking of the dog is more than I can bear and I cannot sleep.

more than (someone) bargained for

- more than someone thought that he or she would get

The problems caused by the dishonest employee were more than the company bargained for.

more the merrier

- the more people who join in the fun the better it will be

The more the merrier I thought as everyone went to the beach.

more to (something) than meets the eye

- something is more complex or difficult than it appears

There is more to the new contract than meets the eye and everyone is pleased with it.

morning after (the night before)

- a hangover

The man is not feeling well. It is the morning after the night before.

move a product

- to sell a product

We should have no trouble to move the new product.

(not) move a muscle

- to not move even a small amount

The doctor told me not to move a muscle when he was fixing my leg.

move heaven and earth to (do something)

- to try every way to do something, to do everything one can to do something

I will move heaven and earth to help my friend get a job with our company.

move in on (someone or something)

- to try to take over something that belongs to another

The man was angry because another salesman was moving in on his sales territory.

move into (something)

- to get started in a new job or business

Our company has decided to move into computer sales.

move to (do something)

- to propose to do something (usually at a meeting)

I will move to have another meeting next week so we can discuss the problem.

move up (in the world)

- to advance and become successful

The young man is working hard and is moving up in the world.

movers and shakers

- important people who are able to get things done

The movers and shakers of the city went to the opening of the new art gallery.

much ado about nothing

- much excitement about nothing

There was much ado about nothing over the small scandal in the city government.

much in evidence

- very visible or evident

The symphony was much in evidence at the opening of the cultural center.

much sought after

- wanted or desired very much

Old fishing equipment is much sought after by collectors around the world.

muddy the water

- to make matters confusing, to make something less clear

The questions from the audience helped to muddy the water during the debate.

mull over (something) or mull (something) over

- to think about something carefully

I took much time to mull over the job offer from our competitor.

mum's the word

- I will not say anything about a secret that I know

"Mum's the word about the party. I won't tell anybody."

murder on (something)

- to be very destructive or harmful to something

My new shoes are murder on my feet.

Murphy's Law

- anything that can go wrong will go wrong

"First my flight was canceled. Then my next flight was late. Finally they lost my luggage. It must be Murphy's Law."

muscle in on (someone or something)

- to forcefully try to discipline someone or take over someone's property or business

The large supermarket was trying to muscle in on the business of the small shops.

music to one's ears

- something that one likes to hear

When I heard that I could go to the sales convention it was music to my ears.

musical chairs

- the transfer of people in an organization into different jobs (especially each other's jobs)

They are playing musical chairs at our company as people move from one position to another position.

a must have

- something that you must have

The new computer screens are a must have for computer users.

muster up the courage

- to build up one's courage to do something

I plan to muster up the courage and ask the woman for a date.

my God

- used to express surprise or shock

"My God, we are going to hit the other car!"

my goodness

- used to express surprise or shock

"My goodness," the woman said when she saw the small dog jump into the swimming pool.

my gut tells me

- my instincts tell me that something is as it is

My gut tells me that I am not going to get a new job soon.

my one and only

- one's spouse or girlfriend or boyfriend

My one and only will be home before dinner.

N

nail down (someone or something)

- to make certain or sure of something

I am trying to nail down the exact time that the meeting will begin.

a nail in (someone's) coffin

- something that will harm someone

Fighting with his boss was a nail in the man's coffin. He will not get a promotion now.

naked eye

- the human eye (with no binoculars etc.)

It was difficult to see the star with the naked eye.

one's name is mud

- a person's reputation is bad

The man's name is mud now that he was caught stealing money from his company.

name of the game

- the main part of a matter, the main point

The name of the game for the company is selling cars and nothing else.

name (someone) after (someone or something)

- to give someone the name of another person or place or thing

My cousin is named after his mother's grandfather.

narrow escape

- an escape with little chance of error

The boy had a narrow escape when he almost fell from his bicycle.

narrow-minded

- not tolerant, not willing to accept the ideas of others

Our teacher is very narrow-minded.

near at hand

- to be close or handy to someone

I looked for a pair of scissors that were near at hand.

neck and neck

- to be equal or nearly equal in a race or contest

The two teams were neck and neck in the race to win the national championship.

neck of the woods

- an area or part of the country

My friend has never been to my neck of the woods.

need (something) like (one needs) a hole in the head

- to not need something at all

My friend needs a new computer like he needs a hole in the head.

need (something) yesterday

- to need something in a very big hurry

I need a new computer yesterday.

needle in a haystack

- something that is very hard to find

Looking for the lost receipt among the other receipts was like looking for a needle in a haystack.

neither fish nor fowl

- something that does not belong to a definite group or category

The man's opinions were neither fish nor fowl and nobody could put them into an identifiable category.

neither here nor there

- not relevant to the thing being discussed, to be off the subject

"What you are saying is neither here nor there. We are talking about our plans this year - not five years in the future."

neither hide nor hair of (someone or something)

- no sign or indication of someone or something

I have seen neither hide nor hair of my friend recently.

nervous Nellie

- a timid person who lacks determination and courage

The boy is a nervous Nellie and is afraid of the other students in the school.

nest egg

- money that someone has saved for the future

The man has a large nest egg and will have no financial problems if he leaves his company.

never fear

- do not worry

"Never fear, I will finish work and meet you for the movie."

never in one's life

- not in one's experience

I have never in my life, seen such a strange person.

never mind

- don't worry, don't bother

"If you don't have time to pick up my laundry today, never mind, I will get it tomorrow."

never would have guessed

- never would have thought something to be the case

I never would have guessed that the woman on the bicycle is the richest woman in the city.

new Idioms**new blood**

- fresh energy or power, someone or something that provides new life or vigor to something

The woman is a good employee and helped to bring new blood into our organization.

new broom sweeps clean

- a new person makes many changes

A new broom sweeps clean and when our new boss arrived he changed many things in our organization.

new deal

- a complete change, a fresh start, another chance

The player received a new deal by the team although the previous year he did not play well.

new hire

- a person who has recently been hired

The man at the gas station is a new hire and is very slow at his job.

new lease on life

- a renewed outlook on life

The mechanic gave my car a new lease on life after I took it to him for repairs.

new person

- a person who has become much better or feels much better

My friend is a new person now that he has quit smoking.

next-door neighbor

- the person living in the house or apartment next to you

My next-door neighbor often brings over fresh bread that she has baked.

next of kin

- one's closest living relative or relatives

The police notified the dead woman's next of kin after the accident.

next to nothing

- hardly anything, almost nothing

I was able to buy a computer for next to nothing.

nice and (some quality)

- lots of (some quality)

The bed was nice and warm and I fell asleep immediately.

(in the) nick of time

- at the very last moment

I was able to board the airplane in the nick of time.

nickel and dime (someone)

- to charge someone many small amounts of money

The small repairs to my car are beginning to nickel and dime me.

night on the town

- a night of celebration

We went out for a night on the town when we finished the project.

night owl

- a person who likes to stay up late at night

My friend is a night owl and stays up late every night.

a nine day/day's wonder

- someone or something that is of interest to people only for a short time

The actor was a nine day's wonder and everyone forgot about him after a couple of months.

nine times out of ten

- almost always

Nine times out of ten a small computer problem can be easily fixed.

nine-to-five-job

- a job with regular and normal hours

Many people like the regular hours of a nine-to-five job.

nip and tuck

- evenly matched, almost even

They were going nip and tuck but the younger man finally won the race.

nip (something) in the bud

- to stop something at the start

We were able to nip the computer problem in the bud.

no Idioms

no bed of roses

- a difficult or bad situation

It is no bed of roses for the man with no job and a large family to support.

no cigar

- not agreed to, no, certainly not

I almost got the job but in the end it was no cigar.

no deal

- not agreed to, no, certainly not

It was no deal when my plan was rejected at the meeting.

no dice

- no, certainly not (this expression is used as a refusal to a request)

"No dice. I will not lend you any money."

no doubt

- without doubt, surely, certainly

No doubt my friend will be the one to win the contest again this year.

no end

- almost without stopping, continually

The little girl cried no end when she could not find her favorite doll.

no end of/to (something)

- seeming almost endless, very many or much of something

The man had no end of problems when he lived overseas for a year.

no go

- not agreed to, no, certainly not

It is no go for our wish to have three games this weekend. We can only have two games.

no great shakes

- mediocre, unimportant

The hotel was no great shakes and I would not recommend that my friend stay there.

no hard feelings

- no anger or resentment

There were no hard feelings between the two women after their fight at work.

no holds barred

- with no restraints

There were no holds barred during the debate between the two politicians.

no ifs, ands, or buts about it

- absolutely no discussion or doubts about something

"You are going to bed now - no ifs, ands, or buts about it," said the mother to her child.

no joke

- a serious matter

The mistake with the meeting time was no joke. It caused many serious problems.

no kidding

- honestly, really

"No kidding, are you really going to buy a house."

no laughing matter

- a serious matter

The incident was no laughing matter and was taken very seriously by the police.

no love lost between (two people/groups)

- bad feelings or ill will between two people or groups

There is no love lost between my father and our neighbor.

no matter

- regardless

No matter how hard that I try, my piano teacher is never satisfied.

no matter what happens

- in any event, without regard to what happens

No matter what happens I plan to go swimming on Saturday.

no picnic

- not pleasant, difficult

It was no picnic trying to drive to the lake during the storm.

no point in doing (something)

- no purpose in doing something

There is no point in talking to my supervisor. He never listens to what I say.

a no-show

- a person who makes a reservation for something and then neither comes nor cancels it

There were many no-shows at the concert last night.

no skin off (someone's) teeth/nose

- no difficulty for someone

It will be no skin off my teeth if the meeting is canceled.

no sooner said than done

- done quickly

My request to repair the photocopy machine was no sooner said than done.

no spring chicken

- not young anymore

My aunt is no spring chicken but she always has much energy.

no sweat

- easily accomplished, uncomplicated

Finishing the job was no sweat. I finished it in two hours.

no sweat

- no problem

"No sweat. I will help you tomorrow if you need me."

no trespassing

- no entry to a place

There is no trespassing on the field next to the oil tanks.

no two ways about it

- no choice about it

"No two ways about it, you must do your homework and go to bed now."

no-win situation

- a situation where there is no satisfactory solution

It was a no-win situation for the school when they had to deal with the problem student.

no wonder

- not surprising

No wonder the boy is so tired after staying up all night.

nobody's fool

- a smart person, a person who can take care of himself or herself

The woman is nobody's fool. You will not have to worry about her when she starts her new job.

nobody's home

- one's attention is somewhere else, one has a simple mind

Nobody's home I thought, as I tried to have a conversation with the strange man.

nod off

- to fall asleep (usually while sitting or driving etc.)

I nodded off last night while I was watching television.

none of (someone's) beeswax

- to be of no concern to someone

My relationship with my friend is none of my supervisor's beeswax.

none of (someone's) business

- to be of no concern to someone

My personal financial situation is none of my friend's business.

none other than (someone)

- the very person (that one may be talking or thinking about)

I went to the airport and I saw none other than the president of our company.

none the wiser

- to be still confused about something even after it has been explained to you, not knowing any more than before

My sister was none the wiser when I put her fashion magazines in the garbage.

none the worse for wear

- not worse because of use or effort

We were none the worse for wear after our long trip through the mountains.

The bicycle was none the worse for wear after the boy used it for many months.

none too (something)

- not very something, not at all something

The boy was none too smart to try and steal the DVD from the store.

nose about

- to look for something kept private or secret, to pry into something

The little boy likes to nose about the cupboards in his house.

nose around

- to look for something kept private or secret, to pry into something

The secretary nosed around her boss's desk to look for the address.

nose down

- to head down, to bring down the nose of something

The pilot began to nose down the plane as it approached the airport.

a nose in (something)

- unwelcome interest in something, impolite curiosity about something

The man often has his nose in other people's private business where it does not belong.

nose into (something)

- to move into something, to go front end first

We stopped our car and nosed into the parking space.

nose (someone) out or nose out (someone)

- to push someone away, to exclude someone

The famous basketball player nosed out the other players to become the best player in the league.

not Idioms**not a bit**

- none at all

I had not a bit of free time last weekend.

not a living soul

- nobody

There was not a living soul at the restaurant last night.

not a moment to spare

- just in time, no extra time

We arrived at the airport with not a moment to spare.

not able to call one's time one's own

- to be too busy to control one's own schedule

I am not able to call my time my own and I have no time to relax.

not able to go on

- to be unable to continue

I was not able to go on so I stopped running in the marathon.

not able to see the forest for the trees

- to allow the details of a situation to obscure the situation as a whole

The man is not able to see the forest for the trees and always allows the small details to obscure the larger picture of what he is trying to do.

not all (someone or something) is cracked up to be

- to be not as good as someone or something is said to be

The new cook is not all that he is cracked up to be and we have received several complaints about his food.

not all there

- to be not mentally adequate, to be crazy or silly

The man is not all there and sometimes he does very strange things.

not at all

- certainly not

I am not at all happy with my new computer.

not bat an eye

- to not show any signs of being nervous even when something shocking or bad happens

The policeman did not bat an eye when the criminal began to reach for his knife.

not believe one's eyes

- to not believe what one is seeing

I did not believe my eyes when my father gave me a television set for my birthday.

not born yesterday

- to be experienced in the ways of the world

I was not born yesterday and I do not believe what the woman is saying.

not breathe a word about (someone or something)

- to keep a secret about someone or something, to not say anything about someone or something

I promised my friend that I would not breathe a word about his plans for the weekend.

not breathe a word of (something)

- to not tell something to anyone

I will not breathe a word of the plans to my friend.

not buy (something)

- to not accept something to be true

I do not buy the excuse that the man does not have enough money to pay for his dinner.

not by a long shot

- not at all

Not by a long shot was I able to find enough time to finish reading the book.

not enough room to swing a cat

- not very much space

There was not enough room to swing a cat in the small hotel room.

not for a moment

- not at all, never

I did not for a moment believe what the man was saying.

not for anything in the world

- not for anything

I will not for anything in the world go to the restaurant with that woman.

not for hire

- not available to take new passengers (a taxi or something else that is not available to rent)

The first taxi was not for hire so we had to wait for another one.

not for love nor money

- not for anything

I will not for love nor money agree to work weekends next month.

not for publication

- not to be published, secret or private information

The documents from the court trial are not for publication.

not for the world

- not at any price, not for anything

I would not for the world go on a date with that woman.

not give (something) another thought

- to not worry or think about something

I did not give it another thought when I agreed to help my friend move from his apartment.

not give (someone) the time of day

- to dislike someone so much that you totally ignore him or her

I dislike my coworker and would not give her the time of day.

not give/care two hoots about (someone or something)

- to not care at all about someone or something

I do not give two hoots about what my neighbor thinks of me.

not half bad

- to be okay, to be pretty good

The restaurant meal was not half bad and everybody seemed to like it.

not have a leg to stand on

- to have no good proof or excuse for something, to have no good evidence or defence to offer someone

"The company does not have a leg to stand on if they refuse to pay the money that they owe you."

not have a prayer

- to have no possibility of success in something

The man does not have a prayer to get the new job.

not hold a candle to (someone or something)

- to not be nearly as good as someone or something

The new secretary does not hold a candle to the one who quit.

not hold water

- to be illogical, to make no sense

The excuses of the man do not hold water.

not hurt a flea

- to not harm anything or anyone (not even a tiny insect)

My mother would not hurt a flea and she is very kind to everyone who she meets.

not in the same league with (someone or something)

- to be not nearly as good as someone or something

The new coach is not in the same league as the coach who we had last season.

not know enough to come in out of the rain

- to be very stupid

The woman is not very smart and does not know enough to come in out of the rain.

not know one's own strength

- to not realize how destructive or harmful one's strength can be

The little boy does not know his own strength and does much damage when he plays.

not know (someone) from Adam

- to not know someone at all

I did not know the man from Adam.

not know the first thing about (someone or something)

- to not know anything about someone or something

I do not know the first thing about carpets so we asked a specialist to repair the carpet in our apartment.

not know where to turn

- to have no idea what to do about something

The young woman did not know where to turn when she lost her job.

not know whether/if one is coming or going

- to be very confused

My friend did not know whether he was coming or going after the long airplane flight.

not let (someone) catch you (doing something)

- to not let someone discover you doing something

"Do not let me catch you doing that again or you will be in trouble," said the mother to her child.

not lift a finger/hand (to help someone)

- to do nothing to help someone

The girl will not lift a finger to help her mother.

not long for this world

- to be about to die

My uncle is very sick and is not long for this world.

not made of money

- to not have a lot of money

My father always says that he is not made of money when I ask him to give me some.

not miss much

- to not miss observing any part of what is going on

Our teacher does not miss much and we must behave well in her class.

not move a muscle

- to remain perfectly motionless

I was told to not move a muscle while the dentist was working on my teeth.

not much of (something)

- to be rather bad, to be not so good

It is not much of a hotel but I think that it will be good for one night.

not on your life

- definitely not

a) "May I borrow your car?"

b) "Not on your life."

not one iota

- not even a tiny bit

There is not one iota of truth in what my boss is saying about me.

not one's place

- not one's role to do something

It is not my place to tell other people what they should do with their free time.

not see farther than the end of one's nose

- to not care about the future or about what is happening elsewhere or to other people

My friend cannot see farther than the end of her nose and is not interested in other people.

not see past the end of one's nose

- to not care about the future or about what is happening elsewhere or to other people

My boss is not interested in me and cannot see past the end of his nose.

not set foot (somewhere)

- to not go somewhere

We did not set foot in the old building that we passed on our hike.

not show one's face

- to not appear

We asked the man to not show his face at our restaurant if he was not going to behave properly.

not sleep a wink

- to not sleep at all

I am tired today because I could not sleep a wink last night.

not so hot

- to be not very good

I have been feeling not so hot lately because I had a cold last week.

not (someone's) cup of tea

- to be not something that one likes

Classical music is not my friend's cup of tea so she did not go the concert with the others.

not take no for an answer

- to not accept someone's refusal

My aunt would not take no for an answer when I said that I could not eat dinner at her house.

not tell a (living) soul

- to not reveal something to anyone

I did not tell a soul about my fight with my friend.

I promised that I would not tell a living soul about the party.

not touch (something) with a ten-foot pole

- to consider something completely undesirable or uninteresting

That car is dangerous and I would not touch it with a ten-foot pole.

not up to scratch

- not adequate

My uncle's golf game is not up to scratch and he always gets a bad score.

not up to snuff

- not adequate

My piano playing ability is not up to snuff and I need to practice more.

not with it

- to be not able to think clearly

My grandmother was not with it today and we were not able to have a very good visit.

not worth a dime

- to be worthless

Our old sofa is not worth a dime so we put it in the garbage.

not worth a hill of beans

- to be worthless

Anything that our supervisor says is not worth a hill of beans so nobody trusts him.

not worth a plugged nickel

- to be worthless

His promise to pay back the money is not worth a plugged nickel.

not worth mentioning

- to be not important enough to require a comment

The problem that we had with the manager was not worth mentioning so we did not say anything to anybody.

not worth one's while

- to be not worth bothering about

It is not worth my while to go downtown if it is only to do one thing.

not worth the trouble

- to be not important enough to require a comment or to do something

It was not worth the trouble to repair our old stove so we threw it in the garbage.

nothing Idioms

nothing but skin and bones

- to be very thin or emaciated

The young man was nothing but skin and bones when he returned from the long camping trip.

nothing but (something)

- to be only something

There were nothing but people who played wind instruments at the music camp.

nothing doing

- I will not do it, certainly not

"Nothing doing. I am not going to stay and work late again this evening."

nothing down

- to not require a down payment

The young couple purchased their house with nothing down.

nothing if not (something)

- without doubt, certainly

The man is nothing if not punctual. He has never been late in his seven years with this company.

nothing of the kind

- to be nothing like that

My boss thought that I was complaining but I told him that my comments were nothing of the kind.

nothing short of (something)

- to be almost the same as something

It was nothing short of a miracle that the young man survived the car accident.

nothing to choose from

- no choice

There was nothing to choose from when we went to the shoe sale in the afternoon.

nothing to complain about

- everything is all right

I told my boss that I had nothing to complain about regarding my job.

nothing to it

- easy

There was nothing to it and I was able to fix the television in about ten minutes.

nothing to sneeze at

- something that you should take seriously and respect

The man's new salary is nothing to sneeze at.

nothing to speak of

- not many, not much

a) "Did you find any problems during the house inspection."

b) "Nothing to speak of. Everything seemed to be fine."

nothing to write home about

- nothing exciting or interesting happened

a) "Did anything interesting happen during your holiday."

b) "Nothing to write home about," I replied.

now and again

- occasionally

Now and again we have pasta for dinner.

now and then

- occasionally

I like to go to that restaurant now and then.

now or never

- at this time and no other

It was now or never so the young man asked his girlfriend to marry him.

nowhere near

- not nearly

There were nowhere near enough chairs for all of the people who planned to come to the meeting.

null and void

- not valid, canceled

The credit card was null and void and I was unable to use it on my holiday.

a number of things or people

- an indefinite number of things or people

There were a number of reasons why I did not want to study at my father's university.

number one

- oneself, one's own interests

The man is always looking out for number one and he will never do anything for other people.

nurse a grudge

- to keep a feeling of dislike toward someone

My old boyfriend is still nursing a grudge toward me after three years.

nurse (someone) back to health

- to give someone care to restore him or her to good health

My mother spent several weeks with my grandmother trying to nurse her back to health.

nuts about (someone or something)

- to be enthusiastic about something

The man has been nuts about cars since he was a little boy.

nuts and bolts (of something)

- the basic facts about something

The nuts and bolts of the housing loan were carefully discussed by the bank and their client.

nutty as a fruitcake

- to be very crazy

The woman who lives next door is nutty as a fruitcake.

nuzzle up to (someone or something)

- to nestle or cuddle against someone or something (especially with your nose or face)

The puppy nuzzled up to his owner.

O

occur to (someone)

- to come into someone's mind (an idea or thought)

It occurred to me that I will not be able to meet my friend on Saturday because I have to go to the airport to meet someone else.

ocean(s) of (something)

- a very large amount of something

There was oceans of food at the party.

There was an ocean of people at the festival.

odd man out

- an unusual person, a person who is different, a person who is left out of a group for some reason

The boy is always the odd man out at the park.

(the) odd (something)

- an extra or spare something, one or two of something

We saw the odd animal on our hike in the mountains.

an oddball

- a person who does not act like other people

The man is an oddball and nobody likes to work with him.

odds and ends

- a variety of small items (sometimes remnants of something else)

We made games for the children from odds and ends that we have at our house.

odor of sanctity

- an atmosphere of excessive holiness or piety

There was an odor of sanctity in the chambers of the judge at the courthouse.

of Idioms

of age

- to be old enough to be allowed to do something (vote or drink etc.)

When my cousin came of age we had a big party to celebrate.

of age

- to be fully developed, to be mature

Rapid transportation came of age when the first jets were built.

of all the nerve

- how shocking

Of all the nerve for my friend to ask me for more money when she never repaid me what she had already borrowed.

of all things

- Imagine that!

"Of all things," the woman said when the post office employee told her that her package was too large for delivery.

of benefit to (someone)

- to be good for someone, to be a benefit to someone

Another meeting to solve the problem is of no benefit to myself so I will not attend.

of course

- certainly, definitely, naturally

"Of course you can use my car if you want to."

of interest (to someone)

- to be interesting to someone

The man who works at the gas station is of interest to the police in their investigation of the murder.

of late

- lately

Of late, there has been almost no rain in our city.

of no avail

- with no effect, unsuccessful

My complaints to the company were of no avail and nothing was done.

of one's own accord

- by one's own choice

The supervisor decided to leave her job of her own accord.

of one's own free will

- by one's own choice

The man volunteered of his own free will.

of the old school

- attitudes from the past which are no longer popular

Our teacher's attitudes are of the old school and are not often found these days.

off Idioms

off and on

- occasionally

The man has studied French off and on but he is not very serious.

off and running

- to be making a good start, to be progressing well

The candidates are off and running in the race to become mayor of the city.

off balance

- to be not prepared for something, to be unable to meet the unexpected

I was off balance when my boss asked me to deliver the speech instead of him.

off base

- to be inaccurate or wrong

We were off base with our estimate of next year's budget.

off campus

- not on the grounds of a college or university

The used bookstore was off campus but it was very popular with the university students.

off-center

- to be not exactly in the center or middle of something

The picture was off-center and did not look good on the wall.

the off chance

- a slight possibility

I went to the department store on the off chance that I would find a jacket that I liked.

off-color

- to be in bad taste, to not be polite, to be not the exact color

The man likes to tell off-color jokes which most people do not like.

We painted the walls an off-color of white.

off duty

- not working

The police officer was off duty when he saw the bank robbery.

off guard

- not alert to the unexpected

It caught me off guard when my friend suddenly asked me to lend her some money.

off like a shot

- to go away quickly

The children were off like a shot when the school bell rang.

off limits

- forbidden

The factory was off limits to everybody except the workers who worked there.

off one's back

- not bothering someone

I wish that my father would get off my back and stop asking me when I am going to look for a job.

off one's chest

- not bothering you anymore (usually used for a problem)

I talked to my friend and I was able to get my problem off my chest.

off one's hands

- no longer in one's care or possession

I sold my old computer and got it off my hands.

off one's high horse

- not acting proud and scornful, not acting like you are better than others

Our boss got off his high horse when he admitted that he had made many mistakes with the new product.

off one's rocker

- crazy

The man must be off his rocker if he thinks that he can spend much money and not have financial problems.

off season

- not in the busy time of the year, to be restricted (the hunting of an animal)

It was off season so we got a very cheap rate for the hotel room.

It was off season and we could not hunt ducks.

off (someone or something) goes

- someone or something is leaving

"Off we go," I said as we opened the door and left the house.

off the air

- not broadcasting

The small radio station was not popular and is now off the air.

off the beam

- wrong or mistaken

What the man said about the new policy was off the beam and should be ignored by everybody.

off the beaten track

- not well known or often used, unusual

Last night, we went to a small restaurant that was off the beaten track.

off the cuff

- not prepared in advance (used when you are talking)

My father made a few remarks off the cuff when he was accepting the award from his company.

off the hook

- out of trouble or free from an embarrassing situation

I am off the hook now and I will not have to worry about the problem anymore.

off the mark

- not quite exactly right

The cost estimate for the new train station was off the mark.

off the rack

- (an article of clothing that is) available for immediate purchase, ready-made

Our boss always buys his suits off the rack.

off the record

- private, unofficial

The politician told the reporters off the record about the money problems.

off the subject

- not concerned with the subject under discussion

Our teacher often speaks off the subject during our class lectures.

off the top of one's head

- from memory, spontaneous

The boy knew all of the team members off the top of his head.

off the track

- not concerned with the topic under discussion

My friend was off the track when he suggested that the problem was caused by someone else.

off the wagon

- drinking alcohol again after stopping for a period of time

The man is off the wagon again. I saw him yesterday and I am sure that he had been drinking.

off the wall

- odd/silly/unusual

The recent remarks by our boss were off the wall.

off to a running start

- a good and fast beginning

We were off to a running start with our preparations for the autumn festival.

off to one side

- beside something, moved away from something

We will put the chair off to one side while we decide what to do with it.

office politics

- the competition between various groups in a company

I do not like the office politics in my company.

offbeat

- unconventional, different from the usual

The movie was very offbeat which is just the kind of movie that I like.

(as) old as the hills

- very old

The building next to the library is as old as the hills.

an old hand at (doing something)

- experienced at doing something

My father is an old hand at building kitchen furniture.

old hat

- old-fashioned, not new or different

My job has become old hat and I am now tired of it.

on Idioms

on a diet

- to be eating less food so that you can lose weight

I was on a diet for several months last year.

on a dime

- in a very small space, quickly

My new car has very powerful brakes and is able to stop on a dime.

on a first-name basis (with someone)

- good friends with someone

I am not on a first-name basis with my neighbor.

on a fool's errand

- involved in a useless journey or task

I was on a fool's errand as I looked for a store that sold organic candy.

on a large scale

- in large numbers, in a large size

The company likes to do everything on a large scale.

on a shoestring

- with very little money

The man started his new company on a shoestring.

on a splurge

- spending much money extravagantly

We went on a splurge last weekend and spent much money.

on a waiting list

- on a list of people waiting for something

My father is on a waiting list to get an operation on his knee.

on account

- on credit, partial payment of a debt or an invoice

We buy many things on account at the local department store.

on active duty

- doing full-time service (usually used in the military when someone is doing full-time service)

The soldiers were on active duty when the hurricane reached the shore.

on again, off again

- to be unsettled or changeable or uncertain

The plans for the fireworks display were on again, off again because of the windy weather.

on all fours

- on one's hands and knees

I was on all fours as I looked for my grandmother's hearing aide.

on an even keel

- calm and not likely to change suddenly, in a steady and well-balanced situation (the keel is the bottom of a boat or ship and when the boat is on an even keel it is balanced)

The new department was running on an even keel soon after it opened.

on and off

- intermittently, now and then, not regularly

It has been raining on and off since early this morning.

on and on

- continually, at tedious length

The speech continued on and on until we finally left the meeting.

on any account

- for any purpose, for any reason

I am not going to talk to that woman on any account.

on approval

- buying something with the right to return it

We carefully looked at the chair which we had bought on approval.

on behalf of (someone)

- representing someone

The lawyer went to the meeting on behalf of his client.

on bended knee

- with great humility

The young man was on bended knee when he asked his girlfriend to marry him.

on board

- to be on a ship or airplane or train or similar form of transportation

We got on board the airplane just before they closed the doors.

on call

- available to be called to go to work

The man's job is to repair computers and he is always on call.

on campus

- on the grounds of a college or university

We often go to a small coffee shop on campus after our classes.

on cloud nine

- very happy

The woman has been on cloud nine since she decided to get married.

on consignment

- being sold in a store but owned by someone who is trying to sell the item in the store

We went to the store to buy some baby furniture that was being sold on consignment.

on credit

- buying or selling something by using credit

I purchased the stereo on credit.

on deck

- on the deck of a boat or a ship

When we were on the boat we spent most of the time on deck.

on deck

- waiting to take one's turn (especially as a batter in baseball)

The player was on deck and waiting for his turn at bat.

on duty

- at work, currently doing one's work

There was nobody on duty when we arrived at the swimming pool.

on easy street

- having enough money to live comfortably

My uncle has been on easy street since he sold his house and invested the money.

on edge

- nervous or irritable

The boy is on edge because of his exams.

on end

- seemingly endless

My uncle works for hours on end at his hobbies.

on faith

- without question or proof

I take it on faith that my friend will help me if I need help.

on fire

- burning, being burned with flames

The house was on fire when the fire truck arrived.

on foot

- by walking

We plan to go downtown on foot.

on good terms with (someone)

- to be friendly with someone, to have a good relationship with someone

We are on good terms with our neighbors.

on guard

- careful or wary

The store owner has been on guard since he was robbed last month.

on hand

- available

I do not have any aspirin on hand at the moment.

on hand

- nearby, within reach

"Please keep your dictionary on hand during the exam."

on hand

- to be present

The speaker will be on hand after the lecture to answer questions.

on hold

- to be waiting, to be temporarily halted

The construction of the building is on hold while the city engineers finish their inspection.

on hold

- to be left waiting on a telephone line

I phoned the bank but I was quickly put on hold.

on horseback

- on the back of a horse

We went to the campground on horseback.

on ice

- away for safekeeping or later use, postponed

The city may put the plans for the new stadium on ice while they try to raise more money.

on impulse

- done without planning

I bought the new DVD on impulse.

on land

- on the land, on the soil, not at sea

The old sailor was never very comfortable when he was on land.

on line

- connected to a computer

The editor is able to do most of his work on line.

on location

- a movie being filmed in a location away from the movie studio

The movie was filmed on location in the mountains.

on lunch

- to be on a lunch break

I was on lunch when my friend phoned.

on medication

- taking medicine for a current medical problem

The woman has been on medication for many years.

on no account

- for no reason, absolutely not

On no account will I let my friend borrow my laptop computer.

on occasion

- occasionally

We go to my favorite restaurant on occasion.

on one's best behavior

- being as polite as possible

The little boy was on his best behavior when he went to meet with his teacher.

on one's chest

- thoughts or feelings that are worrying you and that you might need to share with someone else

I had a long talk with my friend last night because I had many problems on my chest.

on one's coat-tails

- as a result of someone else doing something

The mayor was elected on the coat-tails of his brother who is a famous actor.

on one's feet

- recovering from sickness or trouble

I was sick for two weeks but now I am on my feet again.

on one's feet

- standing up

We were on our feet when the singer walked onto the stage.

on one's guard

- to be cautious or watchful

I was on my guard when I went into the meeting with my boss.

on one's (own) head

- to be one's own responsibility

The boy brought the anger on his own head and should not try and blame someone else.

on one's high horse

- acting as if one is better than others, very proud and scornful

The boy is always on his high horse and never thinks about other people.

on one's honor

- with honesty and sincerity

I am on my honor when I look after the money for our club.

on one's mind

- currently being thought about

The incident at school was on my mind all week.

on one's own

- by oneself

The young girl has been on her own since she finished high school.

on one's own time

- during one's personal time, not while one is at work

The employees must make their personal phone calls on their own time.

on one's person

- carried with someone

The criminal had a knife on his person when he was arrested.

on one's shoulders

- one's responsibility

"Please don't try to put the failure of your business on my shoulders."

on one's toes

- alert

The teacher asks the students many questions to keep them on their toes.

on order

- something that is ordered with the delivery expected at some future date

The store has several computer printers on order.

on paper

- in theory, if judged from the written evidence

On paper, the idea seems like it will be very successful.

on par with (someone or something)

- equal to someone or something

The new French restaurant is on par with the best restaurants in Paris.

on pins and needles

- excited or nervous

The girl has been on pins and needles all day waiting for the contest to begin.

on probation

- serving a period of probation, serving a trial period

The new employee was on probation before he became a regular member of the staff.

on purpose

- intentionally

I think that the woman spilled her drink on purpose.

on sale

- offered for sale at a special low price

The television set was on sale so we decided to buy it.

on schedule

- at the expected or desired time

The train arrived on schedule and we found our friend easily.

on second thought

- after having reconsidered something

On second thought, I do not think that I will go to a movie tomorrow.

on shaky ground

- unstable, not secure

The man's position at the company has been on shaky ground for a long time.

on (someone's) account

- because of someone

We went to the children's festival on our daughter's account.

on (someone's) back

- making demands or criticizing someone, being an annoyance or bother to someone

My boss has been on my back all week trying to get me to finish my monthly report.

on (someone's) behalf

- acting as someone's agent, acting for the benefit of someone

I was able to sign for the registered letter on my wife's behalf.

on (someone's) case

- making demands or criticizing someone, being an annoyance or bother to someone

The mother is always on her son's case to make him clean his room.

on (someone's) doorstep

- in someone's care, as someone's responsibility

The responsibility for feeding the extra staff suddenly arrived on my doorstep.

on (someone's) head

- on someone's own self (often used with blame)

The responsibility for fixing the computer was on my head.

on (someone or something's) last legs

- almost worn out or finished or broken, close to exhaustion or close to death

My computer is on its last legs and soon I will have to buy a new one.

I was on my last legs when I came home from shopping.

on (someone's) say-so

- with someone's permission or authority

I was able to ask for a new stove on the apartment manager's say-so.

on (someone's) shoulders

- to be someone's responsibility

The responsibility for organizing the office is always on my shoulders.

on speaking terms with (someone)

- on friendly terms with someone

The woman is not on speaking terms with her older sister.

on standby

- to be waiting for a seat or ticket to become available on a train/plane/bus

We decided to fly to visit my parents on standby.

on target

- on schedule, exactly as predicted

Our company is on target to have its best year of sales ever.

on the air

- being broadcast on radio or TV

The television program has been on the air for three years now.

on the alert (for someone or something)

- watchful and attentive for someone or something

The police are on the alert for the man who robbed the small store.

on the average

- generally, usually

On the average, I get about eight hours of sleep every night.

on the ball

- intelligent, able to do things well

The man is on the ball and can usually get his work done quickly.

on the bandwagon

- doing or joining something because many others are doing it

Everybody in our company is on the bandwagon to eliminate smoking in the workplace.

on the beam

- just right or correct, doing well

What the politician said about the tax problem was right on the beam.

on the bench

- sitting or waiting for a chance to play in a sports game

The new player was forced to sit on the bench for most of his first season.

on the bench

- for a judge to be directing a session of court

The judge was on the bench for three days last week.

on the blink

- not working

My stereo has been on the blink for many months.

on the block

- for sale

Our house has been on the block for over a month now.

on the borderline

- undecided, in an uncertain position between two things

My test scores are on the borderline between passing or failing the course.

on the button

- exactly on time

I arrived for the meeting right on the button.

on the contrary

- as the opposite

I thought that the movie would be boring but on the contrary it was quite interesting.

on the defensive

- trying to defend oneself

I always feel that I am on the defensive when I talk to my friend about money.

on the dole

- receiving welfare

There are many people on the dole who live in the poor area.

on the dot

- right on time

The man always arrives for his meetings on the dot.

on the double

- very fast

My father asked me to bring him the newspaper on the double.

on the edge of one's seat

- nervously and excitedly waiting for something

I have been on the edge of my seat all day while I wait for the contest to begin.

on the eve of (something)

- just before something, on the evening before something

The sports fans were very excited on the eve of the big game.

on the face of it

- from the way that something looks, superficially, on the surface

On the face of it, it looked like the speeding car had caused the accident.

on the fence (about something)

- undecided (about something)

The politician is on the fence about the tax issue.

on the fritz

- not operating properly

My television set is on the fritz and I may have to buy a new one.

on the go

- busy doing many things

I have been on the go since early morning trying to prepare for the meeting.

on the heels of (something)

- soon after something

There were two weeks of heavy rain on the heels of the big earthquake.

on the horizon

- soon to happen

The government promised that there would be a tax decrease on the horizon.

on the horns of a dilemma

- bothered by having to decide between two things or people

We were on the horns of a dilemma as we tried to decide if we should move or stay in our apartment.

on the hot seat

- subject to much criticism or questioning

I was on the hot seat when my supervisor asked what had happened to the broken computer.

on the hour

- exactly on the hour mark (12:00, 1:00 etc.)

My grandmother must take her medicine on the hour.

on the house

- provided free by a business (usually a bar or restaurant)

The hotel room was not ready when we arrived so they gave us something to drink on the house.

on the job

- working, during working hours

The young man has only been on the job for a few weeks now.

There is no food permitted on the job at our company.

on the level

- honest

The manager was on the level with me when he told me about my job possibilities.

on the lookout for (someone or something)

- watchful for someone or something

I am always on the lookout for original movie posters.

on the loose

- free to go, not shut in or locked in by anything

The zoo animals were on the loose for three hours before the zookeeper discovered their escape.

on the make

- trying to get some advantage from other people

"Be careful of that man. He is on the make and will try to cheat you."

on the market

- available for sale

I have seen many good cameras on the market recently.

on the mend

- in the process of healing or becoming better

My friend broke his leg last week but he is now on the mend.

on the money

- exactly right, exactly the right amount

I was on the money when I guessed the correct amount for the plane ticket.

on the move

- moving around from place to place, in motion

My sister is in Europe and has been on the move for several months now.

on the nose

- just right, exactly

What the woman said about our new boss is on the nose.

on the off-chance

- in case something may happen, with the slight possibility that something may happen

I asked the salesman if he had the new computer in his store on the off-chance that he may have one.

on the one hand

- from one point of view

On the one hand I want to go on a nice holiday but on the other hand I do not have enough money.

on the other hand

- however, in contrast, looking at the opposite side of a matter

The boy is very intelligent but on the other hand he is very lazy and always gets low marks at school.

on the point of (doing something)

- ready to start doing something

The man was on the point of buying a new car when he lost his job.

on the QT

- secretly, without anyone knowing

I do not want anyone to know about my plans so I will discuss them on the QT.

on the right track

- following the right set of assumptions

I am on the right track in my search for a good piano teacher for my daughter.

on the road

- travelling somewhere (especially as a salesman or performer)

The man is a salesman and is often on the road.

on the rocks

- to be in a state of difficulty, to be having problems (usually used for a relationship)

The man has been married for seven years but his relationship is now on the rocks.

on the same page

- thinking similarly about something

I was on the same page as my friend about our plans for a holiday.

on the same wavelength

- thinking similarly about something

Everybody is on the same wavelength about the need for change in the company.

on the sly

- secretly

We went to the restaurant on the sly so that nobody would know where we were.

on the spot

- in a difficult or embarrassing situation

The man was suddenly put on the spot when the reporter asked him about the money.

on the spur of the moment

- on a sudden wish or decision, suddenly, without planning, on impulse

I bought a new bicycle on the spur of the moment.

on the strength of (something)

- due to something such as a promise or evidence

On the strength of my high test scores I was admitted to the university that I wanted.

on the take

- accepting bribes

The border guard was discovered to be on the take and was immediately fired.

on the tip of one's tongue

- not quite able to remember something

The name of the movie is on the tip of my tongue.

on the trail/track of (someone or something)

- seeking someone or something

The police dogs were on the trail of the bank robber.

on the up-and-up or on the up and up

- to be honest/trustworthy/sincere

I do not like that company because they are not on the up-and-up.

on the verge of (doing something)

- just about to do something

I was on the verge of quitting my job when I suddenly changed my mind.

on the wagon

- not drinking alcohol (usually used for someone who has a drinking problem)

The man has been on the wagon for seven months now.

on the warpath

- very angry, looking for trouble

Our boss is on the warpath today so you should stay away from him.

on the way (somewhere)

- on the route to somewhere

We got something to eat on the way to the airport.

on the whole

- in general

On the whole, I think that the plan is a good idea but I would like to study it further.

on the wrong tack

- following the wrong course of action

The leader of the meeting went on the wrong tack and caused much confusion.

on the wrong track

- following the wrong set of assumptions, going the wrong way

The police were on the wrong track when they went to question the owner of the store.

on thin ice

- in a risky situation

The woman was on thin ice with her company after she continued to come to work late every morning.

on time

- at the scheduled time, exactly at the correct time

Our train arrived exactly on time.

on tiptoe

- standing or walking on the front part of the feet

I walked around the house on tiptoe so that I would not wake up my family.

on top

- in the lead

The boy was on top of his class when he was in university.

on top of (something)

- in addition to something, along with something

On top of everything else my boss wants me to work on Sunday.

on top of (something/things)

- managing very well, in control of things

We can keep on top of our work now that we have someone to help us.

on top of (something/things)

- to know all about something, to be up-to-date

My friend reads the newspaper every morning and is on top of the latest news.

on top of the world

- feeling very good

I was on top of the world after I learned about the scholarship that I had won.

on trial

- being tried in court

The man is on trial for stealing money from his company.

on vacation

- away from work, taking a vacation

I will be on vacation during the first two weeks of July.

on view

- visible, on public display

The new sculptures were on view and everybody in the town could see them.

once Idioms

once again

- again, one more time, once more

I tried once again to phone my boss at his home .

once and for all

- permanently, finally

I told my friend once and for all that I would not give him any money.

once in a blue moon

- very rarely

I only go to that restaurant once in a blue moon.

once in a lifetime

- only happening one time in one's lifetime

The chance to see the famous singer may happen only once in a lifetime.

once in a while

- occasionally

We like to go to a Japanese restaurant once in a while.

once or twice

- a few times

We went to the new restaurant once or twice but we did not really like it.

a once-over

- a quick look at someone or something, a quick examination of someone or something

We gave the rental car a once-over before we signed the contract.

once upon a time

- far in the past

Once upon a time a beautiful princess lived in a castle in a small town.

one Idioms

one and all

- everyone

One and all were invited to the community center to listen to the author speak.

the one and only

- a famous and talented person, the unique and only someone

Yesterday, the newspaper published an interview with the one and only inventor of the DVD player.

one and the same

- the very same thing, the very same person

It is one and the same if we finish the job today or continue until tomorrow.

The principal and vice-principal is one and the same. They are the same person.

one-armed bandit

- a slot machine for gambling

My friend spent the weekend with a one-armed bandit and now he has no money.

one by one

- one at a time, each in turn

One by one the singers walked onto the stage.

one foot in the grave

- near death

The woman has one foot in the grave and is not expected to live much longer.

one for the (record) books

- something very unusual or remarkable

The latest complaint about noise at work is one for the books and is very stupid.

one in a thousand/hundred/million

- unique, one of a very few

I only had a one in a million chance of finding my ring which I dropped into the lake.

one jump ahead of (someone or something)

- better prepared or more successful than someone or something else, expecting and prepared for what will happen

The little boy was one jump ahead of the other students after he went to summer school.

one little bit

- any at all, at all (usually used in the negative)

I do not agree with my supervisor one little bit about the new schedule.

a one-night stand

- an activity lasting only one night

The band played one-night stands in many small towns.

one of these days

- someday in the future

One of these days I am going to talk to my supervisor about moving to another department.

one step ahead of (someone or something)

- better prepared or more successful than someone or something else, expecting and prepared for what will happen

The city was one step ahead of the builders in trying to understand the problem.

one to a customer

- each person can have or receive only one of something

The cameras had a limit of one to a customer at the store.

a one-track mind

- thinking about only one thing

The man has a one-track mind. All he thinks about is money.

the one-two

- quick or decisive action that takes someone by surprise

The salesman gave the customer the one-two and the customer quickly agreed to buy the product.

one up on (someone)

- to have an advantage over someone, to be one step ahead of someone

The boy was one up on the other students because he studied very hard.

one-upmanship

- the ability to keep ahead of others, the ability to keep an advantage

The man's one-upmanship and his desire to be better than everyone else makes many people dislike him.

one way or another

- somehow

One way or another I am going to attend the annual general meeting tomorrow.

only have eyes for (someone)

- to like only one person, to be loyal to only one person

My sister only has eyes for her boyfriend.

onto (someone or something)

- to have discovered the truth about someone or something

My supervisor is onto the new saleswoman who is taking money from her sales register.

open Idioms

open a conversation

- to start a conversation

I tried to open a conversation with the man in the bus.

open a meeting

- to begin a meeting

They opened the meeting by welcoming the new guests.

open and aboveboard

- to be honest, to be visible to the public

The company is open and aboveboard and they run their business very honestly.

an open-and-shut case

- something (often a legal matter) that is simple and clear

It was an open-and-shut case when the judge decided the case of the stolen computer.

an open book

- someone or something that is easy to understand

My friend is an open book. He is very easy to understand.

open fire on (someone)

- to start shooting at someone, to start asking questions or criticizing someone

The police opened fire on the man with the gun.

The managers of the company opened fire on the supervisor at the meeting and began to criticize him.

open for business

- a shop or restaurant or business that is open and ready to do business

The small shop is open for business after a long holiday.

open one's heart to (someone)

- to talk about one's feelings honestly, to confide in someone

I opened my heart to my friend when I saw her at the restaurant last night.

open Pandora's box

- to uncover more problems or issues than you expected or wanted

The investigation of the company was like opening Pandora's box. Many other problems were discovered.

open season on (someone or something)

- a time when everyone is criticizing someone, unrestricted hunting of an animal

It is open season on our boss and everyone feels free to criticize her.

It is hunting season now and open season on deer.

an open secret

- a secret that so many people know about that it is no longer a secret

It is an open secret that I will be leaving my company next month.

open (someone's) eyes to (something)

- to make someone become aware of something

The scandal opened our eyes to the problems that can occur in a large company.

open (something) up or open up (something)

- to unwrap something

The little boy was laughing as he opened his birthday presents up.

open (something) up or open up (something)

- to reveal the possibilities of something

The departure of the school principal opened his job up to other members of the staff.

open (something) up or open up (something)

- to make something less congested

We opened up the yard by cutting down some trees.

open (something) up or open up (something)

- to start the use of something such as land or a building

The government is planning to open more land up to farming.

open the door to (something)

- to permit/allow something to become a possibility

The new sports center opened the door to many possibilities for getting the students involved in physical activity.

open to (something)

- to be willing to learn or hear about new ideas or suggestions

Our principal is open to new ideas about how to meet the needs of the students.

open up a can of worms

- to create unnecessary complications

The dispute with our competitor opened up a can of worms about how to market our product.

open up on (someone or something)

- to attack someone or something, to fire a gun or other weapon at someone or something

The man with the gun opened up on the people on the bus.

open up to (someone)

- to talk frankly or truthfully to someone

I always open up to my friend when I meet her.

open with (something)

- to start with something

The convention opened with a speech from the president of our company.

an opening gambit

- an opening statement etc. to help give one an advantage in bargaining etc.

The union made several concessions in their opening gambit while negotiating with the company.

the opposite sex

- the opposite sex to someone (either male or female)

The math classes were divided so that nobody had to study with a member of the opposite sex.

or else

- or suffer the consequences

The teacher told the students to be quiet or else.

or words to that effect

- with other words that have a similar meaning

My boss told me not to begin the project now or words to that effect.

the order of the day

- something necessary, the usual practice

The order of the day is to clean up the mess that the storm caused last night.

order (someone) around/about

- to give commands to someone

Our new supervisor is always trying to order people around.

other fish to fry

- other more important things to do

I think that the man has other fish to fry and will not be happy to continue with his present job.

the other side of the tracks

- the poorer/richer section of a town (the opposite place from where you are)

The girl came from the other side of the tracks and was not welcome in some parts of the city.

other things being equal

- only if other factors remain unchanged

Other things being equal, I think that the new school policy will be a success.

the other way round

- the reverse, the opposite

It was the other way round. My friend wanted to go swimming - not me.

an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure

- it is easier to prevent something bad than to deal with the results

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure and I decided to stay home and rest rather than go out in the cold with my sore throat.

out Idioms

out and about

- to be able to go out and travel or move or walk around

My aunt is out and about again after her knee operation.

an out-and-out (something)

- a complete or absolute something

The man is an out-and-out liar and nobody believes what he says.

out cold

- to be unconscious, to have fainted

The patient was out cold when the nurse went to check on him.

out from under (someone or something)

- to be free and clear of someone or something

My friend is out from under the control of her older sister who has gone to live in a different city.

out front

- to be in the front of one's house

"My bicycle is out front," said the young boy.

out in force

- appearing in great numbers

The volunteers were out in force all weekend trying to collect money for the new hospital.

out in left field

- far from the right answer

The man's question was out in left field. He did not know what we were talking about.

out in the cold

- alone, not included

I was left out in the cold after my friends went to the movie without me.

out like a light

- to have fallen asleep very quickly

I went to bed early last night and I was out like a light.

out of a clear blue sky

- suddenly, without warning

The orders from our boss came out of a clear blue sky and everybody was surprised.

out of action

- to not work or operate, to not be able to do something

The player will be out of action for many more weeks.

out of all proportion

- of an exaggerated proportion

The complaints of the students were out of all proportion to what the problem was.

out of bounds

- outside the boundaries of a playing area

The ball was out of bounds and the boy had to go over the fence to get it.

out of breath

- tired and breathing quickly.

I was out of breath after running from the station.

out of character

- unlike one's usual character, not appropriate for one's character

Arguing with the sales clerk was out of character for my father. He never argues about such things.

out of circulation

- not active, to not join in what others are doing

The boy has a new girlfriend so he will be out of circulation for awhile.

out of commission

- broken, not operating

The old boat is out of commission and will not be operating for several months.

out of condition

- not in good physical condition

I am out of condition and I need to exercise more.

out of consideration for (someone or something)

- thinking about someone's feelings or needs, considering someone's feelings or needs

The police did not release the names of the accident victims out of consideration for the family members.

out of control

- uncontrollable, wild

The soccer fans were out of control after their team won the championship.

out of courtesy

- in order to be polite to someone

We phoned our customers out of courtesy to tell them about the late arrival of the products.

out-of-date

- no longer current or in style

Computer equipment becomes out-of-date very quickly.

out of earshot

- too far from a sound to hear it

My parents were out of earshot and I could not hear what they were saying.

out of fashion

- not fashionable

Most of the woman's clothes are out of fashion.

out of favor (with someone)

- to not have a person's goodwill

I have been out of favor with my boss for a few months now.

out of gas

- to have no gas in a vehicle, to be tired or exhausted

The truck was out of gas so we could not use it last night.

I was out of gas so I went home and went to bed.

out of hand

- wild, not able to be controlled

The party got out of hand and we had to call the police to quiet things.

out of hand

- immediately and without consulting anyone

The police dismissed my complaint about my neighbors out of hand.

out of keeping with (something)

- not following the rules of something

The late lunch was out of keeping with our policy of working until the afternoon before we ate lunch.

out of kilter

- not balanced right, not in a straight line or lined up correctly

The door is out of kilter and does not open very well.

out of line

- unacceptable, not correct

The salesman's proposal to travel to New York is out of line. We can never accept it.

out of luck

- without good luck

I was out of luck and could not find the part for my computer printer at the store.

out of necessity

- because of necessity, due to need

The library will close on Saturdays out of necessity. It has no money.

out of one's element

- in a situation where one does not belong or fit in

The teacher is out of his element teaching the computer course. He does not know anything about computers.

out of one's hair

- not bothering or annoying someone

The woman got her children out of her hair and was able to do some work.

out of one's mind/head/senses

- to be silly or crazy, to be not using common sense

My friend was out of his mind to buy a new computer when he has no money.

out of one's shell

- to move from silence or shyness and into friendly conversation with others

The girl came out of her shell and began to play with the other children.

out of order

- not working

The public telephone was out of order.

out of order

- against the rules - used in a meeting when someone does not obey the rules of speaking

The man's question was ruled out of order at the meeting and he was not able to ask it.

out of place

- in the wrong place, at the wrong time, improper

The woman's comments at the party were out of place. She should have said them another time.

out of pocket

- the direct expenses that one spends for business or personal use

My out-of-pocket expenses for my recent business trip were very low.

The money that I spent on my business trip was all out of pocket.

out of practice

- performing poorly due to a lack of practice

I am out of practice and I cannot play the trumpet very well now.

out of print

- no longer available for sale from the publisher

The book is out of print and is very difficult to find.

out of proportion

- having the wrong proportion relative to something else

The curtains were out of proportion to the small window.

out of reach

- not close enough to be reached or touched, unattainable

The books on the bookshelf were out of reach and I could not get the dictionary easily.

out of season

- not easily available for sale at some time of year, not legally able to be hunted

Strawberries are now out of season.

The hunting of ducks is now out of season.

out of service

- not operating at this time

The elevator has been out of service all week.

out of shape

- not in good physical condition

My mother is out of shape and cannot walk for a long distance.

out of sight

- not visible

The children were out of sight and we could not see them.

out of sight

- to be unbelievable or stunning

The view from the tower was absolutely out of sight.

out of (something)

- to have none left of something

The restaurant was out of fish so we had meat instead.

out of sorts

- not feeling well, in a bad mood

Our boss is out of sorts today so you should wait until tomorrow to speak to him.

out of spite

- with the desire to harm someone or something

My friend would not help me out of spite because he is angry at me.

out of step

- not in step or keeping pace with someone

The band members were out of step when they were marching in the parade.

out of step with (someone or something)

- out of harmony or not in agreement with someone or something

The boy is out of step with the rest of the group and he needs to think about what he should be doing.

out of stock

- not immediately available in a store

The special pens were out of stock when I went to the store this afternoon.

out of style

- not fashionable

The style of jeans that my friend likes to wear have been out of style for a long time now.

out of the blue

- unexpectedly, coming from nowhere

The boy asked his girlfriend, out of the blue, to get married.

out of the corner of one's eye

- at a glance, with a glimpse of someone or something

I saw the car coming out of the corner of my eye and quickly moved away.

out of the frying pan and into the fire

- going from one problem to another (maybe more serious) problem, from something bad to something worse

When the man changed jobs he jumped out of the frying pan and into the fire. His new job is much worse.

out of the hole

- out of debt

I am working at an extra job to try and get out of the hole.

out of the loop

- having no information about what is happening somewhere, uninformed

The man is out of the loop and does not know what is happening in his company.

out of the ordinary

- unusual

There was nothing out of the ordinary at the scene of the accident.

out of the question

- impossible

"You have no money so going to Brazil for a holiday is out of the question."

out of the red

- out of debt

The small company is out of the red after cutting many costs.

out of the running

- no longer being considered

The new movie is out of the running for any major awards.

out-of-the-way

- in a remote or far away location

We went to an out-of-the-way restaurant for dinner.

out of the woods

- no longer in a dangerous situation or condition

The man's injury is very serious and he is not out of the woods yet.

out of thin air

- out of nothing, from nowhere

The deer jumped out of thin air and onto the road.

out of this world

- wonderful, fantastic

The cake at the restaurant is out of this world.

out of touch with (someone or something)

- no longer in contact with someone

I am out of touch with many of my friends from high school.

out of town

- not in one's own town

My father has been out of town a lot this year.

out of tune

- not in agreement, not going well together

We are out of tune with what the other members of the group think.

out of tune

- not properly adjusted for pitch

Two members of the orchestra were out of tune.

out of turn

- not at the proper time or order

The teacher becomes angry when her students speak out of turn.

out of whack

- not functioning correctly, out of adjustment

My DVD player is out of whack and I cannot use it at all.

out of work

- unemployed

Many people are out of work in our town.

out on a limb

- in a dangerous or risky position or situation, in a difficult position

The man went out on a limb and offered his brother the job.

out on bail

- out of jail after you have paid bail money

The man is out on bail after being arrested for robbing a bank.

out on parole

- out of jail but still under police supervision

The bank robber is out on parole after being in jail for seven years.

out on patrol

- away from a central location and observing or inspecting something

The soldiers were out on patrol most of the night.

out on the town

- out in a town or city having fun and partying

I am tired today because we were out on the town last night.

out to lunch

- crazy, not alert

The man seems to be out to lunch but everybody likes him.

outgrow (something)

- to get too big or old for something

The little boy is beginning to outgrow his small bicycle.

outguess (someone)

- to guess what someone else might do

It is difficult to outguess my boss. She always knows what is going on in our company.

outside of (something)

- except for something, other than something

Outside of the weather, our vacation was quite enjoyable.

outside the box

- not bound by old and limiting structures or rules or practices

Everybody in the design company was encouraged to think outside the box in order to be creative.

over Idioms**over a barrel**

- in a helpless or trapped position

We have the other company over a barrel and we should be able to win the contract easily.

over and above (something)

- in addition to something

Over and above my salary, I also get a transportation allowance from my company.

over and done with

- finished

I want to get my legal case over and done with and forget about it.

over and over

- repeated many times

I told my friend over and over that I do not want to go to a movie.

over one's dead body

- never, under no circumstances

Over my dead body will I let my friend use my car.

over (someone's) head

- beyond one's ability to understand something

The joke went over the girl's head and she did not understand it.

over (someone's) head

- to go to a more important person who has a responsibility for something, to go to a higher official

The store clerk could not help us so we went over his head and talked to his boss.

over the hill

- past one's prime, too old to be useful

The man is over the hill and should not be working at all.

over the hump

- over the difficult part of something

We are over the hump with our project and should be able to finish it soon.

over the long run/haul

- over a long period of time

Over the long run the man plans to expand his business.

over the short run/haul

- for the immediate future, over a short period of time

Over the short run the old computer is adequate for the job.

over the top

- excessive, overdone

The demands of our boss are over the top and everybody dislikes him.

over with

- at the end of something, finished with something

The game is over with so we can eat dinner.

overnight (something)

- to send a package or document somewhere for delivery the next day

I will overnight the documents tonight.

owing to (someone or something)

- because of someone or something

Owing to the bad weather many airplane flights were canceled.

own up to (something)

- to accept the blame for something, to admit one's guilt about something

The suspected murderer owned up to the murder of his wife.

P**pace oneself**

- to adjust one's speed so that you do not become too tired

We tried to pace ourselves during the hike so that we did not become too tired.

pack a punch/wallop

- to provide a burst of energy or power or excitement

The storm packed a wallop and did much damage to the boats.

pack it in

- to stop working (usually at the end of the day), to leave work

We decided to pack it in early and go home.

pack of lies

- a series of lies

Everything that the man said was a pack of lies and nobody believed him.

pack them in

- to attract a lot of people

The new restaurant is able to pack them in with its new and exciting menu.

packed in like sardines

- to be packed somewhere very tightly

The commuters on the train were packed in like sardines during the morning rush hour.

pad the bill

- to add false expenses to a bill

The salesman often pads the bill when he goes on a business trip.

paddle one's own canoe

- to do something by oneself

I was forced to paddle my own canoe when the rest of the staff went away for a seminar.

pain in the neck/ass/butt

- an annoying or bothersome thing or person

Dealing with my neighbor is always a pain in the neck.

paint oneself into a corner

- to get into a bad situation that is difficult or impossible to get out of

My friend has painted himself into a corner now that he has begun to fight with his supervisor.

paint the town red

- to go out and party and have a good time

We decided to paint the town red after we passed our exams.

pal around (with someone)

- to be friends with someone

I have begun to pal around with a friend from my evening language class.

pale around the gills

- to look sick

My colleague was looking a little pale around the gills when he came to work today.

pale as a ghost

- extremely pale

My grandfather was as pale as a ghost when he entered the hospital.

pale as death

- extremely pale

The woman in the hospital waiting room was as pale as death.

palm (something) off on (someone) or palm off (something) on (someone)

- to deceive someone by a trick or a lie, to sell or give something to someone by tricking him or her

The man palmed off his old television set as one that was new and reliable.

pan out

- to end or finish favorably, to work out well

"I hope that your plans to go back to school pan out."

paper over the cracks (in/of something)

- to try to hide the faults or difficulties of something

Our boss tries to paper over the cracks in our office and will not deal with staff problems.

par for the course

- to be just what was expected, to be nothing unusual

That was par for the course. My coworker always comes late when there is much work to do.

paradise (on earth)

- a place on earth that is as lovely as paradise

The resort in the mountains was paradise on earth.

part and parcel of (something)

- a necessary or important part of something

The house that we bought is part and parcel of a much larger piece of property.

part company (with someone)

- to leave someone, to depart from someone

The two business partners decided to part company and begin their own businesses.

part with (something)

- to give away something, to sell something

The boy had to part with the car that he loved.

partake of (something)

- to eat or drink something

I decided not to partake of the large dinner before the golf tournament.

partial to (someone or something)

- to favor or prefer someone or something

Our boss is partial to the new person who recently began to work in our company.

particulars of (something)

- the specific details about something

I have no knowledge of the particulars of my father's business dealings.

parting of the ways

- a point at which people separate and go their own ways

I had a parting of the ways with my friend from high school.

party line

- the official ideas of a group (usually political) that must be followed by all members of the group

The members of the political party were forced to follow the party line on most issues.

party's over

- a happy or good time has come to an end

The party's over and I must now begin to work after my long holiday.

pass Idioms

pass away

- to die

The man's father passed away when he was 96 years old.

pass for/as (someone or something)

- to succeed in being accepted as someone or something

The young woman was trying to pass for a reporter when she went to the concert.

The man was passing as someone who knew more than he did.

pass muster

- to pass a test or checkup, to measure up to a certain standard

The player was not able to pass muster and was not included on the team.

pass off (something) as (something else) or pass (something) off as (something else)

- to sell or give something by false claims, to offer something as genuine when it is not

The man passed off the watch as a diamond watch and received more money than it was worth.

pass on

- to die

My grandmother passed on when she was 92 years old.

pass on (something)

- to give away something that you do not use anymore

The girl always passes on her old clothes to her younger sister.

pass oneself off as (someone or something) else

- to claim to be someone one is not, to pretend to be someone else

My friend passed himself off as a reporter and was able to get into the concert free.

pass out

- to faint

Three teenage girls passed out at the rock concert.

pass out (something) or pass (something) out

- to distribute something

The teacher passed out the exam papers before the test.

pass the buck

- to shift responsibility for something to someone else

Our supervisor always tries to pass the buck if someone tries to criticize his work.

pass the hat

- to attempt to collect money from a group of people for some project or special cause

We passed the hat in order to raise money to buy a movie projector.

pass the time

- to fill up time by doing something

My grandfather usually passes the time reading and working in his garden.

pass through (someone's) mind

- to think about something briefly, to remember something briefly

It passed through my mind that I must go to the bank and get more money before my holiday.

passport to (something)

- something that allows something good to happen

A university education is usually a passport to a better job.

past master at (something)

- someone who is extremely good or skillful at something

The chef is a past master at cooking with various kinds of sauces.

past (someone or something's) prime

- to be beyond the most useful or productive period of someone or something

The young skater is past her prime as a figure skater.

pat on the back

- praise

My boss gave me a pat on the back when I finished the project.

patch up (something) or patch (something) up

- to fix something

I am trying to patch up my differences with my friend.

path of least resistance

- the easiest (but not always the best) way to do something

I took the path of least resistance and quit the class rather than try to pass the course.

pave the way for (someone or something)

- to prepare someone or something for something

The new policy is designed to pave the way for more effective communication in the company.

pay Idioms

pay a call on (someone)

- to visit someone

I went to the head office to pay a call on the accounting manager.

pay a king's ransom for (something)

- to pay a great deal of money for something

My friend paid a king's ransom for his new entertainment system.

pay an arm and a leg (for something)

- to pay much money for something

I paid an arm and a leg for the new frames for my glasses.

pay as you go

- to pay costs as they occur or as you buy some goods

The small businesses were forced to pay as they go when the bank began to look at their loans.

pay attention to (someone or something)

- to listen to someone with full attention, to look at something with full attention

The man never pays attention to what his supervisor tells him.

pay dividends

- to produce good results and benefits

A good education will always pay dividends for a person.

pay dirt

- a profitable or useful discovery or venture, dirt in which much gold is found

The company hit pay dirt when they published the new computer software.

pay for (something)

- to pay money for something

I paid for dinner for my friends.

pay homage to (someone)

- to praise or respect or honor someone

The entire country paid homage to their dead leader.

pay in advance

- to pay for something before it is received or delivered

I paid in advance for the frames for my pictures.

pay lip service to (something)

- to express loyalty or support for something insincerely

The city council paid lip service to the concerns of the taxpayers.

pay off

- to yield good results

My risks in starting the new business finally paid off.

pay off (something) or pay (something) off

- to pay for something completely and be free from a debt

The woman paid off her car loan so she now has some extra money to spend.

a pay-off

- the results of one's work, a bribe

The young man expects to get a big pay-off from his university education when he begins to look for a job.

pay one's debt to society

- to serve a sentence for a crime (usually in prison)

The young man spent several years in prison in order to pay his debt to society.

pay one's dues

- to earn one's right to something through hard work or suffering

The young athlete paid his dues and became a member of the best team in the city.

pay one's last respects

- to attend the funeral of someone

Our family gathered to pay their last respects to our grandmother.

pay one's (own) way

- to pay the costs for something by oneself

The young man was forced to pay his own way during college.

pay (someone) a back-handed compliment

- to give someone a false compliment that is really an insult

The woman paid her colleague a back-handed compliment when she told her what a good job she was doing.

pay (someone) a compliment

- to compliment someone, to give someone a compliment

My supervisor paid me a compliment for the work that I was doing.

pay (someone or something) a visit

- to visit someone or something

I paid the tax office a visit to try and resolve my tax problem.

pay (someone) off or pay off (someone)

- to pay someone a bribe

The man tried to pay off the customs agent to quickly get his products into the country.

pay (someone) respect

- to have and show respect to someone

The children refuse to pay their teacher respect.

pay the penalty/price (for something)

- to suffer the negative results of something

The company will pay a penalty for their bad business decisions.

pay the piper

- to face the results of one's actions, to be punished for something

The city government was forced to pay the piper after many years of bad management.

The student wasted most of the term playing. He was forced to pay the piper when the professor assigned much work at the end of the term.

pay through the nose (for something)

- to pay a lot of money for something

My uncle always pays through the nose when he buys a new car.

pay to (do something)

- to be beneficial to do something

I decided that it would pay to buy a new car rather than fix my old car.

pay up

- to pay someone immediately

My friend asked me to pay up because he needed the money.

pecking order

- the way people are ranked in relation to each other

The pecking order in my company is very difficult for others to understand.

peeping Tom

- someone who looks in the windows of strangers

The police arrested a peeping Tom near our apartment building last week.

peg away (at something)

- to keep working at something, to keep trying something

My friend has been pegging away at his job for many years now.

a penny for one's thoughts

- the telling to others of what you are thinking about

"A penny for your thoughts," the girl said as she saw her boyfriend looking out the window.

penny pincher

- a person who is very careful with his or her money - even very small amounts like a single penny

The man is a penny pincher and will never spend any money.

a penny saved is a penny earned

- money saved through being thrifty is the same as money earned by working

A penny saved is a penny earned and trying not to spend a lot of money is as good as trying to earn money.

penny-wise and pound-foolish

- wise or careful in small things or purchases but not wise or careful about bigger things or purchases

The man is penny-wise and pound-foolish and he wastes his money on things that he does not need.

people who live in glass houses should not throw stones

- you should not complain about other people if you yourself are not perfect

"You should not criticize other people. Remember, people who live in glass houses should not throw stones."

pep (someone or something) up or pep up (someone or something)

- to make someone or something more active and energetic

I drank a cup of coffee in order to pep myself up for my afternoon class.

pep talk

- a speech to encourage people to try harder and not give up

The coach gave his team a pep talk after they lost three games last month.

perk up

- to become energetic or happy after being sad or tired

My sister began to perk up after she had a chance to rest after her long drive.

persist in (doing something)

- to continue to do something with determination

The young child persisted in making noise that disturbed his father.

persist with (something)

- to continue with something

I am going to persist with my demand that my boss transfer me to another department.

perspective on (something)

- a way of looking at a situation and determining what is important

My friend has a different perspective on what recently happened in his company.

peter out

- to die down gradually, to grow less strong

The large crowd from the football game began to peter out and the streets around the stadium became quiet.

pick Idioms

pick a fight with (someone)

- to start a fight with someone (usually on purpose)

The man tried to pick a fight with his old friend.

pick a lock

- to open a lock without a key

The robbers picked the lock and entered the store.

pick a quarrel with (someone)

- to start a quarrel with someone (usually on purpose)

I do not like that woman because she likes to pick a quarrel with other people.

pick and choose

- to choose very carefully from a number of possibilities

The company will pick and choose the best people for the new project.

pick at (someone)

- to be very critical of someone

The woman is always picking at her husband for very small things.

pick at (something)

- to eat only little bits of something

The boy is sick and will only pick at his food.

pick holes in (something)

- to find all the flaws and falsehoods in an argument, to criticize something severely

My supervisor picked holes in my argument to buy a new computer for the office.

a pick-me-up

- food or a drink that one takes when one feels tired or lacks energy

I stopped at the restaurant on my way home for a quick pick-me-up.

the pick of (something)

- the best of a group

The members of the Olympic team are the pick of the best athletes in the country.

pick off (someone or something) or pick (someone or something) off

- to kill with a carefully aimed shot from a gun or other weapon

The police were easily able to pick off the man who was shooting the rifle.

pick on (someone)

- to do or say bad things to someone

The boy always picked on his sister when they were children.

pick on someone your own size

- to abuse or bully someone who is big enough to fight back

The older boy should pick on someone his own size rather than fighting with the smaller boy.

pick one's way through (something)

- to work slowly through written material

I picked my way through the material that I had to study for the exam.

pick out (something) or pick (something) out

- to choose or select something

I tried to pick out a nice necktie for my father.

pick over (something) or pick (something) over

- to sort through something

The customers picked over the best clothes at the department store sale.

pick (someone's) brain

- to extract ideas or information from someone for one's own use
My friend is always picking my brain to get new ideas for his business.

pick up a cold/influenza

- to acquire an illness
The boy picked up a cold during the weekend.

pick up a radio wave etc.

- to catch or receive the sound of a radio etc.
We could not pick up any radio stations when we were travelling through the mountains.

pick up a trail/scent

- to recognize the trail of a hunted person or animal
The tracking dogs were easily able to pick up the trail of the criminal.

pick up (someone) or pick (someone) up

- to take someone to the police station, to arrest someone
The police picked up the man for drinking and driving.

pick up (someone) or pick (someone) up

- to take on passengers in a bus or car or train etc.
The bus picked up my mother at six o'clock in the morning.

pick up (something) or pick (something) up

- to get or receive or claim or buy something
I picked up my dry cleaning after I finished work yesterday.
I picked up some milk after work.

pick up (something) or pick (something) up

- to learn something without formal study
I picked up a lot of French when I lived in France for a year.

pick up (something) or pick (something) up

- to take something that has fallen on the floor or ground and put it somewhere else
"Could you please pick up my pen from the floor."

pick up (something) or pick (something) up

- to collect or gather something
We picked up some beautiful seashells on the beach.

pick up speed

- to increase the speed of something
The car picked up speed as it began to go down the hill.

pick up the check

- to pay the bill for someone else
I picked up the check at the restaurant.

pick up the tab

- to pay the bill for someone else
I picked up the tab for the dinner at the restaurant.

pick up where one left off

- to start again after an interruption
It was getting late so we decided to stop work and pick up where we left off the next day.

picked over

- rejected, worn
All of the best shoes were picked over in the shoe sale.

picture of health

- a perfect example of health
The man is feeling very well and is the picture of health.

picture of (something)

- the perfect example of something

My father was the picture of happiness when I saw him.

pie in the sky

- a goal or plan that is too optimistic, a future reward after death

The boy's plans for his summer were pie in the sky. He would never complete them.

piece of cake

- easy

That job was a piece of cake. It was the easiest thing that I ever did.

piece of the action

- a share in a plan or a project

The small company was able to get a piece of the action with the large building contract.

pig in a poke

- something accepted or bought without looking at it carefully

The used bicycle that I bought was a pig in a poke. I do not know if I will like it.

piggy bank

- a small bank (sometimes in the shape of a pig) for saving coins

The girl put all of her spare money into her piggy bank.

piggyback

- sitting or being carried on one's back and shoulders

The man was carrying his child around the room piggyback style.

pile into (something)

- to climb into something roughly

The teenagers piled into the old car after school.

pile out of (something)

- to get out of something roughly

The passengers piled out of the bus when it arrived at the station.

pile up

- to accumulate, to put things on top of each other

I piled up the magazines on top of the small table.

pillar of strength/support

- someone who provides strong support for someone, a strong or powerful person

The man is a pillar of strength in his community.

pin one's hopes/faith on (someone or something)

- to put one's hope or trust or faith in someone or something

I will not pin my hopes on getting a promotion next month.

pin (someone) down or pin down (someone)

- to keep someone from moving, to make someone stay in one place or position

The wrestler won the match after he pinned his opponent down for almost a minute.

pin (someone) down or pin down (someone)

- to make someone tell the truth or make a commitment

I cannot pin my friend down as to when he will pay back the money that he owes me.

pin (something) on (someone)

- to place the blame for something on someone

My friend tried to pin the blame for breaking the computer on me.

pinch-hit for (someone)

- to substitute for someone

The best batter on the baseball team was asked to pinch-hit for the injured player.

pinch pennies

- to be careful with money, to be thrifty

My friend is pinching pennies in order to save money for his vacation.

pink slip

- a dismissal notice from a job

The man received his pink slip yesterday and no longer has a job.

pins and needles

- a tingling feeling in one's arms and legs, a feeling of excitement

I was on pins and needles all day as I waited to hear the results of the exam.

pipe down

- to be quiet

The teacher asked the children to pipe down in the classroom.

pipe dream

- an unrealistic plan

My friend has a lot of pipe dreams about what he wants to do in the future.

pipe up

- to speak louder

We asked the speaker to pipe up so that we could hear him.

pipe up with (something)

- to speak up and say something

The student piped up with a comment from the back of the class.

piping hot

- very hot

The food from the kitchen was piping hot when the waiter brought it to the table.

pip-squeak

- a small and unimportant person

The boy called his friend a pip-squeak which made the friend very angry.

pique (someone's) interest/curiosity

- arouse interest or curiosity

The conversation with the filmmaker piqued my interest and I began to watch his movies.

piss (someone) off or piss off (someone)

- to bother or annoy someone, to make someone angry

My supervisor pissed me off when he asked me to work late last night.

pit (someone or something) against (someone or something)

- to set one group or person against another

The fight over the new shopping center pit the property owners against the local businesses.

pitch a tent

- to put up a tent

We pitched the tent in a field beside a stream.

pitch an idea

- to make a proposal or suggestion about something (just as a baseball pitcher will pitch a ball in a baseball game)

I will pitch my idea about a new project tomorrow.

pitch-black

- to be very black

It was pitch-black when we left the restaurant to return home.

pitch camp

- to set up or arrange a campsite

We stopped for the night next to a small river and pitched camp.

pitch-dark

- very dark

It was pitch-dark when I took the garbage out to the garbage can.

pitch in

- to give help or money for something

My friends pitched in and helped me finish the job quickly.

pitch (someone) a curve (ball)

- to surprise someone with an unexpected act or event

The lawyer pitched the woman a curve when he began to ask questions unrelated to the court case.

place an order

- to submit an order

I recently placed an order for a new refrigerator.

place (someone)

- to recall someone's name

I could not place the woman at the meeting but I knew that I had met her before.

place the blame on (someone or something)

- to blame someone or something

The teacher placed the blame on the boys for breaking the flower vase.

plain and simple

- absolutely, without further complication or elaboration

It was plain and simple. I decided to buy the car and I did not want to talk about it further.

play Idioms

play a joke/trick on (someone)

- to do a joke or trick that affects someone

The boy played a trick on his teacher.

play along with (someone or something)

- to agree to cooperate with someone's plan

I decided to play along with my friend and his plan to buy a horse.

play around/about with (someone or something)

- to engage in some play with someone or something

The boy was playing around with the dog when his mother entered the room.

play ball with (someone)

- to cooperate with someone, to join in an effort with others

"If you play ball with the new manager things should go well for you."

play both ends (against the middle/center)

- to scheme in a way that makes two sides fight against each other

The man was trying to play both ends against the middle when he tried to negotiate with the two departments in his company.

play by ear

- to play a musical instrument by remembering the tune and not by reading the music

Although the woman cannot read music she can play by ear and is a very good musician.

play-by-play (description)

- a detailed description of an event (usually sports) as it is taking place

The announcer gave a play-by-play description of the championship game.

play by the rules

- to follow the generally accepted rules of something

The team members refused to play by the rules so they were asked to leave the tournament.

play cat and mouse with (someone)

- to tease or fool someone or something by pretending to let them go free and then catching him or her or it again

The boxer was playing cat and mouse with his opponent although he could have won the match easily.

play down (someone or something) or play (someone or something) down

- to give less emphasis to someone or something, to make someone or something seem less important
The politician played down the survey that showed that he was becoming less popular.

play dumb/ignorant

- to pretend to be ignorant about something

I played dumb when my boss asked me if I knew anything about the problems with the printer.

play fair

- to do something by the rules

The politician was not playing fair during the election campaign.

play fast and loose with (someone or something)

- to act carelessly or thoughtlessly or irresponsibly

The witness began to play fast and loose with the facts of his case and was criticized by the judge.

play first chair

- to be the leader of a section of instruments in an orchestra or a band, to act as a leader

The woman plays first chair in an orchestra.

play footsie with (someone)

- to touch the feet of someone under the table while flirting

The couple in the restaurant were playing footsie during dinner.

play footsie with (someone)

- to engage in some kind of collaboration in a political situation

The opposition party was playing footsie with the government in order to try and influence their policy.

play for keeps

- to do something that is permanent and a serious move

My friend was playing for keeps when he refused to give the information to his boss.

play hard to get

- to be coy and shy

The young woman was playing hard to get but actually she wanted to go on a date with the young man.

play hardball with (someone)

- to behave in an extremely determined way to get what you want (hardball and softball are from the game of baseball)

The owners of the football club decided to play hardball when they began negotiating with the star player.

play hooky

- to stay away from school or work without permission

The boy often plays hooky and does not go to school.

play innocent

- to pretend to be innocent and not concerned about something

The little boy played innocent when the teacher asked him about the broken window.

play into (someone's) hands

- to do something that gives someone else an advantage

The man walked out of the meeting in anger which only played into the hands of the other side.

play it by ear

- to decide to do something according to the situation

"Let's play it by ear and decide where to eat after we see the movie."

play it cool

- to act calm and not concerned

I tried to play it cool when the policeman stopped me when I was driving my car.

play it safe

- to avoid taking a risk

The father always plays it safe when he goes swimming with his son.

play off

- to settle a score between two teams or contestants by playing another game or match

Our team had to play off against the other team before we went to the championship.

play off (one group against another)

- to match opposing persons or forces or interests for one's own gain

Nobody likes the supervisor because he is always trying to play off one group of workers against another.

play on/upon (something)

- to cause an effect on something, to influence something

The company played on the feelings of loneliness of some people to get them to buy more products.

a play on words

- a humorous use of a word to suggest a different meaning

Newspaper headlines often use a play on words to give a different meaning to a sentence.

play one's cards close to one's chest

- to be extremely secretive and cautious about something (to hold playing cards close to your chest so the other players cannot see them)

My boss always plays his cards close to his chest when he is negotiating with another company.

play one's cards right

- to take advantage of one's opportunities

"If you play your cards right you will probably get a promotion soon."

play one's trump card

- to use one's most powerful or effective strategy or device

I played my trump card when I told my boss that I would quit if I did not get an increase in salary.

play politics

- to negotiate politically, to allow politics to control a situation where principle should prevail

The government leaders were playing politics with the tax issue.

play possum

- to pretend to be inactive or asleep or dead

My friend was playing possum and did not respond to the conversation around him.

play second fiddle to (someone)

- to be second in importance to someone

The man has been playing second fiddle to his boss for many years and has finally decided to change jobs.

play (someone) for (something)

- to treat or handle someone as something else

My supervisor was trying to play me for a fool but I could easily see what he was doing.

play (someone) off against (someone)

- to scheme in a manner that pits two of your opponents against each other

Our supervisor is always trying to play one group of employees off against another group.

play the devil's advocate

- to argue against something even if you may agree with it

I was playing the devil's advocate when I asked my friend about his plan to change jobs.

play the field

- to date many different people, to avoid steady dates with the same person

After my sister stopped dating her boyfriend she decided to play the field.

play the fool

- to act like a fool, to act in a silly manner

My friend made me play the fool when he left me waiting in the supermarket for two hours.

play the market

- to invest in the stock market

My father has been playing the market for many years now.

play to the gallery

- to perform in a manner that will get the strong approval of the audience

The politician always plays to the gallery and tells his supporters what they want to hear.

play tricks on (someone)

- to trick or confuse someone

The little boy likes to play tricks on his friends.

play up (someone or something) or play (someone or something) up

- to call attention to someone or something, to emphasize someone or something

During the job interview I played up my experience with computers.

play up to (someone)

- to flatter or please someone in order to gain his or her favor

The man is always playing up to his boss so that he can get more free time.

play with fire

- to invite danger or trouble

"You are playing with fire if you start that new project. You will lose money."

played out

- to be tired or worn out, to be exhausted

I was played out last night so I went to bed early.

pleased as punch

- to be very pleased with oneself

I was pleased as punch when I learned about the money that I had won.

plenty of something

- much of something

There was plenty of food at the party.

the plot thickens

- things are becoming more complicated or interesting

"The plot thickens," I thought as the situation at my company became more and more complicated.

plow into (someone or something)

- to crash into someone or something with force

The truck plowed into the group of people waiting for the bus.

plow into (something)

- to attack or eat or do something vigorously

We plowed into the food as soon as the waiter brought it to our table.

plow through (something)

- to work through something with determination

I had much homework to do but I was able to plow through most of it by early evening.

pluck up one's courage

- to make oneself have courage

The young man plucked up his courage and asked the woman for a date.

plug a product

- to promote a product

The soccer star makes a lot of money when he agrees to plug a product.

plug away at (something)

- to keep working at something

My friend has been plugging away at his job for several years now.

plug in (something) or plug (something) in

- to place a plug into a receptacle

We plugged in the coffee pot before the meeting began.

plug up (something) or plug (something) up

- to stop or fill up a hole or crack or gap

We used some special cement to plug up the leak in the bathtub.

plumb loco

- completely crazy

The man is plumb loco and everybody tries to stay away from him.

poetic justice

- the random but appropriate receiving of rewards or punishments by those who deserve them

It was poetic justice when the man lost the money that he had got illegally.

point of no return

- the halfway point, the point where it is too late to turn back

We reached the point of no return on our journey and decided that it would be impossible to turn back.

point of view

- one's way of thinking or one's opinion about something

I find it difficult to understand my friend's point of view on many issues.

point out (someone or something) to (someone)

- to explain or call attention to someone or something

My teacher was very kind when she pointed out my mistakes to me.

point the finger at (someone)

- to blame someone for something, to identify someone as the guilty person

I did not point the finger at anyone but I wanted to know who broke the computer.

pointed remark

- a remark clearly aimed at a particular person or thing

The manager made a pointed remark during the meeting in order to get everyone's attention.

poised for (something)

- to be ready and waiting for something

The army was poised for an attack early in the morning.

poised to do (something)

- to be ready to do something

Our basketball team is poised to win its third championship this evening.

poke about/around

- to look or search for something or just look at things

I was poking about in some antique stores last weekend.

poke fun at (someone)

- to joke about someone, to laugh at someone, to tease someone

The woman is always poking fun at the way her husband plays golf.

poke one's nose into (something)

- to interfere with something

I wish that my neighbor would not always poke her nose into my business.

poles apart

- to be completely opposite, to be very different, to be far from making an agreement

The union and management were poles apart in their attempt to reach a contract agreement.

polish off (something) or polish (something) off

- to finish doing something quickly or completely

We polished off the work early and went to the beach for the day.

polish the apple

- to try to win someone's favor by flattering him or her

The teacher does not like students who try to polish the apple with her.

pony up

- to pay

It is time for my friend to pony up and pay for the exercise equipment that he bought from me.

pooped out

- to be worn out, to be exhausted

We spent all day painting the house so we were pooped out when we arrived home.

pop the question

- to ask someone to marry you

The man finally popped the question to his girlfriend after they had been dating for two years.

pop up

- to appear suddenly or unexpectedly

I had not seen my friend for a year but suddenly he popped up for a visit last week.

pose a question

- to ask a question

The professor decided to pose a question to his audience.

pose as (someone)

- to pretend to be someone

The man was posing as a reporter in order to get information about the company.

possessed by (something)

- to be under the control of something, to be obsessed with something

The woman was possessed by her desire to be the best actress on the movie set.

possessed of (something)

- to have something

The man is possessed of the ability to clearly understand and repeat what others say.

postage and handling

- the charges for handling and sending something by mail

We bought some books over the Internet but the postage and handling was very expensive.

pot calling the kettle black

- a person who is criticizing someone else may be as guilty as the person who he or she criticizes

It was like the pot calling the kettle black when the woman who is always late for work criticized her coworker for also being late.

pound out (something) or pound (something) out

- to type something on a typewriter, to play a song on a piano

I spent several hours trying to pound out an essay on my computer.

pound the beat

- to walk a route

The policeman has been pounding the beat for many years now.

pound the pavement

- to look for a job

The man has been pounding the pavement for a few months now but he still has not found a job.

pour cold water on (something)

- to discourage something

My boss poured cold water on my idea to change the time of our coffee break.

pour it on thick

- to flatter someone greatly

The man has been pouring it on thick but the woman still does not like him.

pour money down the drain

- to waste money

The city is pouring money down the drain with the new subway line.

pour oil on troubled waters

- to calm down a quarrel, to say something to lessen anger and bring peace to a situation
The teachers tried to pour oil on troubled waters when they saw the fight among the students.

pour out

- to come out in great number or quantity, to stream out of a place
After the football game, thousands of fans poured out of the stadium.

pour out one's heart to (someone)

- to tell everything about something to someone
The girl poured out her heart to her mother when her mother returned home from work.

pouring rain

- very heavy rain
I went outside in the pouring rain and became very wet.

power behind the throne

- the person who controls the person who seems to be in charge of something
The general is the power behind the throne in the small country and he has much influence.

powers that be

- the people who are in authority
The powers that be have decided that the summer festival will not be held this year.

praise (someone or something) to the skies

- to give someone or something much praise
The teachers praised the principal to the skies for the new policies at the school.

preach to the choir/converted

- to praise or speak to those who already agree with you, to recommend something to someone who is already in favor of it

I was preaching to the converted when I told my friend about the new car.
Telling the conservationists about the need to preserve green space is preaching to the choir.

precious few/little

- very few, very little
I had precious little time to prepare for my final exam.
There were precious few people at the concert.

prelude to (something)

- an event that comes before and signals another event
The strong wind was a prelude to the large storm that would soon follow.

press one's luck

- to depend too much on luck, to expect to continue to be lucky
My uncle is pressing his luck if he thinks that he will continue to make a lot of money on the stock market.

pressed for time

- to not have enough time
My boss was pressed for time so I did not have a chance to speak to him.

pretty state of affairs

- an unpleasant state of affairs
The mess in the kitchen was a pretty state of affairs which the woman had to return to.

prevail upon (someone)

- to ask or beg someone (for a favor)
I had to prevail upon my friend to lend me some money for my holiday.

prey on/upon (someone)

- to cheat or rob someone
Criminals often prey on people who are the weakest members of society.

prey on/upon (something)

- to catch something for food, to kill and eat something

Cats usually prey on mice and small birds for food.

prick up one's ears

- to listen more closely (like an animal moving its ears to hear better)

I pricked up my ears and listened to what the speaker was saying.

pride and joy

- someone or something that one is very proud of

The little boy is the pride and joy of his parents.

pride oneself on/in (something)

- to take special pride in something

My father prides himself on the fact that he is never absent from work.

prime mover

- the force or person that starts something

The group of executives were the prime movers behind the decision to close the factory in our city.

privy to something

- to be uniquely knowledgeable about something

I was not privy to the decision of my friend to suddenly quit his job.

promise (someone) the moon

- to promise something that is impossible

Before the election the politicians promised everybody the moon but after they were elected they began to talk differently.

prone to (something)

- to be likely to do something

Our manager is prone to saying very strange things.

proof is in the pudding/proof of the pudding is in the eating

- you can only find out if an idea or plan is good by seeing what the results of trying it will be

The proof is in the pudding and if our plan is good then many people will support it. If it is not good then people will not support it.

propose a toast

- to make a toast before drinking

We proposed a toast to our friend who was going away to study for a year.

prove to be (someone or something)

- to be shown or discovered to be someone or something

The problem with the computer proved to be much easier to fix than we had thought.

provided that (something is so)

- on the condition that something is so

We plan to go hiking this weekend provided that the weather is good.

psych (someone) out or psych out (someone)

- to find out the real motives or intentions of someone

I tried to psych out the salesman to see how much he would sell the car for.

psyched out

- to be confused and disoriented

The young man was totally psyched out when the robber entered his apartment.

psyched up (for something)

- to be mentally alert for something, to be ready to do something

Our team was psyched up for the game but they lost anyway.

publish or perish

- university professors often have to publish books or articles in journals or they will not be successful in their jobs at the university

The professor was forced to publish or perish if he wanted to advance in his university career.

pull Idioms

pull a boner

- to do something stupid or silly

I pulled a boner when I sent the E-mail message to the wrong person.

pull a fast one on (someone)

- to cheat or deceive someone

They pulled a fast one on me when they sold me the broken stereo.

pull a gun/knife on (someone)

- to bring out a gun or knife quickly so that you can use it against someone

The robber pulled a knife on the woman in the street.

pull a stunt/trick on (someone)

- to deceive someone

If the boy pulls a stunt like he did last weekend he will be in much trouble with his parents.

pull down (someone) or pull (someone) down

- to humiliate someone

The scandal pulled down the politician from his position in the government.

pull down (something) or pull (something) down

- to demolish something

The city will pull down the old office building rather than rebuild it.

pull down (something) or pull (something) down

- to lower or reduce the amount of something (a school grade etc.)

The difficult chemistry course pulled down my grades during the fall semester.

pull one's punches

- to hold back in one's criticism, for a boxer to hit with light punches

The manager was pulling his punches when he began to criticize his workers.

pull one's weight

- to do one's fair share of the work

"If everyone pulls their weight we can quickly finish and go home."

pull oneself together

- to become emotionally stabilized

The woman tried to pull herself together after learning about her boyfriend's accident.

pull oneself up by one's bootstraps

- to improve oneself or achieve something through one's own efforts

The boy pulled himself up by his bootstraps and went back and finished university.

pull out all the stops

- to use all of one's energy and effort to achieve something

My mother pulled out all the stops to prepare a great birthday party for me.

pull over

- to drive to the side of the road and stop

I was very tired so I pulled over to the side of the road to rest.

pull over (someone) or pull (someone) over

- to force a car to drive to the side of the road and stop (often used when talking about the police)

The police pulled over the man because he had been drinking and driving.

pull rank on (someone)

- to assert one's superior position or authority on someone of lower rank in order to get a privilege or favor

The navy officer pulled rank on the other officers and could stay in the best room in the hotel.

pull (some) strings

- to secretly use influence and power

Our boss was able to pull some strings and get his son a job for the summer.

pull (someone's) leg

- to trick or fool someone in a playful way

My grandfather always pulls my leg when he comes to visit us.

pull (something) off or pull off (something)

- to accomplish something remarkable

My friend is lucky that he pulled off the new business venture with no problems.

pull (something) out of a hat

- to get something as if by magic, to invent or imagine something

The team was able to pull victory out of a hat and win the tournament.

pull (something) to pieces

- to find serious fault with something, to criticize something very severely

The politician tried hard to pull the proposal to pieces.

pull (something) together or pull together (something)

- to organize something, to arrange something

We were able to pull everything together and the convention was a great success.

pull the pin

- to quit a job, to end a project or program or relationship

My friend suddenly decided to pull the pin and quit his job.

pull the plug

- to quit a job, to end a project or program or relationship

The cashier suddenly decided to pull the plug and is no longer working here.

pull the plug on (someone or something)

- to terminate or stop someone or something

The company pulled the plug on the salesman after they learned about his illegal sales activities.

pull the rug out from under (someone)

- to spoil someone's plans, to withdraw support for someone

Our boss pulled the rug out from under our plans to open a bigger office.

pull the wool over (someone's) eyes

- to deceive or fool someone

"Don't let that man pull the wool over your eyes with his excuses."

pull through (something)

- to recover from an illness or misfortune

It looked like my uncle was going to die but he pulled through and is now doing very well.

pull up one's socks or pull one's socks up

- to make a greater effort than before to do something

"You had better pull up your socks or you will not be able to continue working here."

pull up stakes

- to move to another location

We have decided to pull up stakes and move to London.

punch a hole in (something)

- to make a hole in something

I used a hole puncher to punch a hole in the sheet of paper.

punch above one's weight

- to fight at a level that is above what would be expected of you

The boxer will be punching above his weight if he agrees to the match with the stronger boxer.

The small country punches above its weight in most international conferences.

pure and simple

- absolutely, without further complication

It was pure and simple. I did not want to go away for the weekend.

push a product

- to promote a product

The soap company is now pushing their new product.

push off

- to start, to leave

The boat pushed off from the dock and started out to sea.

push one's luck

- to expect to continue to escape bad luck or a negative situation

The woman was pushing her luck to continue to bother her neighbors with her loud music. Someone was going to complain someday.

push (someone) around or push around (someone)

- to make someone do what you want

The sales manager is always pushing around his salespeople.

push the panic button

- to become very frightened or excited at a time of danger or worry

The man thought that his wallet had been stolen so he pushed the panic button and told everyone that it was missing.

push up daisies

- to be dead and buried

My uncle has been pushing up daisies for several years now.

put Idioms

put a bee in (someone's) bonnet

- to give someone an idea (about something)

I put a bee in my friend's bonnet with my plans to go to Germany to study.

put a cap on (something)

- to put a limit on something

The university was forced to put a cap on the number of new students that they could accept.

put a damper on (something)

- to discourage something, to spoil a person's fun

The death of the company president put a damper on the anniversary celebrations.

put a hold on (something)

- to place a restriction on something to show that it is reserved or delayed

I put a hold on several books at the library.

put a product on the map

- to make a product known to the public

We hope that our new advertising campaign will put our product on the map.

put a spin on (something)

- to interpret an event to make it seem favorable to oneself

The politician tried to put a spin on the bad publicity that she had recently been receiving.

put a stop/end to (something)

- to bring something to an end

The company is trying to put an end to the personal use of computers during office hours.

put across (something) or put (something) across

- to make oneself understood, to communicate something

The speaker spends much effort trying to clearly put across what he wants to say.

put all one's eggs in one basket

- to place all one's efforts or interests or hopes in a single person or thing

You should not put all your eggs in one basket and invest all of your money in the stock market.

put an end to (something)

- to cause something to end, to terminate something in a clear manner

The police put an end to the loud party in the public park.

put an issue to bed

- to resolve a topic of discussion

We talked for three hours about the problem but we finally put the issue to bed.

put away (an animal) or put (an animal) away

- to put an animal to death, to kill an animal

We put away our dog because he tried to bite the small girl next door.

put away (something) or put (something) away

- to put something in its proper place, to remove something from sight

The little boy put away his toys.

put down (an airplane) or put (an airplane) down

- to land an aircraft

The pilot put down the airplane very gently when they reached the airport.

put down (an animal) or put (an animal) down

- to take the life of an animal that is suffering

The farmer decided to put down the sick horse.

put down (someone) or put (someone) down

- to criticize someone, to make someone feel bad

The boy is always putting down his girlfriend in front of his friends.

put down (something) or put (something) down

- to stop something by force, to crush something

The soldiers easily put down the rebellion by the rebel army.

put down (something) or put (something) down

- to write a record of something, to write down something

The company told the man to put down his request for a transfer in writing.

put forth (an idea/plan/suggestion)

- to propose something, to suggest something

Our teacher put forth a very good idea about the exams.

put forth (something)

- to show or display something, to produce something

The girl put forth much effort in order to do well on her exam.

put ideas into (someone's) head

- to suggest something (often bad) to someone

My mother was angry because I was putting ideas into my sister's head.

put in a good word for (someone) or put a good word for (someone) in

- to say something in support of someone

I put in a good word for my friend when I was meeting with my boss and supervisor.

put in an appearance or put an appearance in

- to appear somewhere for a short time

I put in an appearance at the party although I was very tired.

put in for (something)

- to apply for something

I put in for a transfer to another department of our company.

put in one's two cents

- to give one's opinion

The girl likes to put in her two cents when she has a chance.

put in (something) or put (something) in

- to submit something

I plan to put in my job application next Monday.

put in (something) or put (something) in

- to plant flowers or plants or vegetables

We will put in some roses in our garden this year.

put in (something) or put (something) in

- to add to what has already been said

Suddenly, my friend put in that he was tired and wanted to go home.

put in (somewhere)

- to stop at a port on a journey by water

The ship put in at several ports during the cruise.

put in time

- to spend time doing something

The man put in much time fixing up his house and now it looks very beautiful.

put off (someone or something) or put (someone or something) off

- to cause a bad feeling for someone, to repel someone

The girl put off the other members of her class by complaining all of the time.

put off (something) or put (something) off

- to postpone or delay something

We put off the game because of the rain.

put on a brave face

- to try to appear happy when faced with a bad situation

My friend put on a brave face even though he had lost his job.

put on a performance/play

- to produce or arrange a play or other performance

My sister helped to put on the school play.

put on airs

- to act superior to others

The girl was accused of putting on airs by her friends.

put on an act

- to pretend that something is different than it really is

The girl was putting on an act when she said that she no longer loved her boyfriend.

put on clothes

- to get into and wear a piece of clothing

I put on my sweater before I went outside.

put on one's thinking cap

- to think hard and long about something

I will put on my thinking cap and try and decide what to do about the problem.

put on the dog

- to dress or entertain in an extravagant manner

The couple put on the dog for the visit of their old college friend.

put on the feed bag

- to eat a meal

I put on the feed bag as soon as I got home last night.

put on weight or put weight on

- to gain weight

My friend has been putting on weight since he stopped working.

put one through one's paces

- to make someone demonstrate what he or she can do

The coach put the team through its paces as they prepared for the championship game.

put one's best foot forward

- to act or appear at one's best

I tried to put my best foot forward when I talked to my boss about a salary increase.

put one's cards on the table

- to be frank, to tell everything

I put my cards on the table and told my boss about my plans for next year.

put one's clothes in mothballs

- to put something in storage with mothballs

The woman plans to put her coat in mothballs for the winter.

put one's dibs on (something)

- to lay a claim to something

I put my dibs on the most comfortable chair when I went to my friend's house.

put one's finger on (something)

- to locate something precisely, to remember something exactly

I was unable to put my finger on the exact date of my friend's arrival.

put one's foot down

- to object strongly to something, to take firm action

Our boss put his foot down and did not allow any more money to be spent on entertainment.

put one's foot in one's mouth

- to say something that is the wrong thing to say in a situation

The man put his foot in his mouth when he told his girlfriend about the surprise party.

put one's head on the block for (someone or something)

- to take great risks for someone or something

Our supervisor was always willing to put his head on the block for any member of the staff.

put one's heads together

- to discuss or talk about something with someone or a group of people and try to solve a problem

We put our heads together to try and find a solution to the problem.

put one's mind to (something)

- to give one's complete attention to something

The boy can do anything if he puts his mind to it.

put one's money where one's mouth is

- to stop talking and do something

I want the man to put his money where his mouth is and do more than talk about things.

put one's nose to the grindstone

- to keep busy doing one's work

I put my nose to the grindstone and worked all weekend on my history essay.

put one's own house in order

- to organize one's own private affairs

Our boss should put his own house in order before he tells others what to do.

put one's shoulder to the wheel

- to get busy and start working

I put my shoulder to the wheel and tried to finish my work so that I could go home early.

put one's thinking cap on or put on one's thinking cap

- to start thinking in a serious manner

I put my thinking cap on and tried to think of a name for the student newspaper.

put one's two cents (worth) in

- to add one's comments to (something)

I tried to put my two cents in at the meeting but nobody would listen to me.

put oneself in (someone) else's place/position

- to allow oneself to see or experience something from someone else's point of view

It was difficult to put myself in the woman's place after she had lost her only child.

put our/your heads together

- to confer about something, to discuss something

We put our heads together to think of a new name for the football team.

put out a fire or a light

- to make a flame or light stop burning, to extinguish a flame or fire

The citizens were able to put out the fire before the fire department arrived.

put out (about/by/that something)

- to be inconvenienced or irritated about something

My friend was put out that her sister did not call her when she was in town.

put out (some) feelers or put (some) feelers out

- to attempt to find out something without being too obvious about it

I put out some feelers to see if it would be easy to find another job.

put out (something) or put (something) out

- to produce or make something

The company decided to put out a newsletter for the employees.

The band will put out another record soon.

put pressure on (someone)

- to try to get someone to do something, to make demands on someone

The company put pressure on the manager to change his decision.

put some teeth into (something)

- to increase the power of something

The government plans to put some teeth into the new laws against property crime.

put (someone or something) at (someone's) disposal

- to make someone or something available to someone

I put myself at my friend's disposal when he visited me last summer.

put (someone) away or put away (someone)

- to put someone in a mental institution or hospital

The man was doing much damage to himself so the police put him away in a mental institution.

put (someone) down as (something bad)

- to judge that someone is bad or undesirable in some way

The store clerk immediately put the young man down as someone who may steal something in the store.

put (someone) down for (something) or put down (someone) for (something)

- to put someone's name on a list of people who volunteer to do something or give money for something or wait for something

The salesman put me down for one of the new cars that will soon arrive at the car dealership.

put (someone) in his or her place

- to scold someone for rude or bad behavior, to rebuke someone

Our teacher was very angry and put the student in his place for his rude remark.

put (someone) in the picture

- to tell someone what the situation about something is

The supervisor has decided to put me in the picture about the new policy at work.

put (someone) off or put off (someone)

- to make someone feel uneasy, to avoid responding to someone

He put me off with his complaints about our company.

put (someone) on or put on (someone)

- to fool or joke with someone, to tease someone

I think that my friend is putting me on. I do not believe that he will move to Italy.

put (someone) on a pedestal

- to respect or admire or worship a person

My father used to put my mother on a pedestal when I was young.

put (someone) on hold

- to leave someone waiting during a telephone call

I phoned the bank and the receptionist put me on hold.

put (someone) on the spot

- to ask someone embarrassing questions

The teacher put me on the spot with her questions during the class.

put (someone) out or put out (someone)

- to inconvenience or bother someone

I do not want to put my aunt out so I plan to stay in a hotel when I visit her.

put (someone or something) out of one's head or mind

- to try not to think about someone or something

My friend has been trying to put his girlfriend out of his mind since they stopped seeing each other.

put (someone or something) out to pasture or put out (someone or something) to pasture

- to retire someone or something

We decided to put our old horse out to pasture and stop riding him.

put (someone) through (to someone)

- to transfer someone to someone else's telephone

I waited a few minutes before they put me through to the manager.

put (someone or something) through (something)

- to cause someone or something to succeed or pass

The young man worked hard to put himself through university.

The city government put the new law through quickly.

put (someone) through the wringer

- to cause a lot of stress for someone

The man put his wife through the wringer during their long divorce.

put (someone) to bed

- to help or make someone (often a child) go to bed

We put our child to bed early last night.

put (someone) to shame

- to be much better than someone else, to embarrass someone

The school project of my neighbor's child put our child to shame.

put (someone or something) to sleep

- to cause someone to sleep or die through drugs or anesthesia

The doctor put the woman to sleep before the operation began.

put (someone or something) to the test

- to see what someone or something can achieve or do

I put my boss to the test when I asked him to replace our sales manager at work.

put (someone) up or put up (someone)

- to provide lodging for someone

I usually put my friend up when he comes to visit.

put (someone) up to (something)

- to persuade or cause someone to do something

The young boy's friend put him up to cheat on the examination.

put (something) above (something)

- to regard something as more important than something else

The man puts his family above everything else

put (something) down in black and white

- to write something on paper, to write the details of something down on paper, to write down the terms of an agreement/contract

I had to put my proposal down in black and white.

put (something) down to (something)

- to explain something as being caused by something else

The police put the accident down to the bad road conditions at the time.

put (something) forward or put forward (something)

- to state or advance an idea

I put my idea forward at the meeting to see if anyone was interested in it.

put (something) in mothballs

- to put something in storage

The government decided to put the old ferry in mothballs.

put (something) into practice

- to start using a plan or idea

I think that our supervisor should put some of his ideas into practice.

put (something) into print

- to have something printed and published

It was difficult to get the company to put the policy into print.

put (something) into words

- to find a way to express a feeling with words

It was difficult to put my sadness at my aunt's death into words.

put (something) on hold

- to postpone something, to stop the progress of something

We decided to put the weekend trip on hold.

put (something) on ice

- to delay or postpone something

The city put the plans for the new stadium on ice as they tried to get more money for the project.

put (something) on paper

- to write something down

I put my ideas for the new business on paper.

put (something) on the back burner

- to delay or postpone something

We have put our plans for a holiday on the back burner while we do some repairs to our house.

put (something) on the front burner

- to make something a priority

We must put the plans for the new office on the front burner.

put (something) on the line

- to speak very firmly and directly about something

I put my reputation on the line when I supported my friend and his business proposal.

put (something) on the map

- to make something known and popular

We are trying to put our new restaurant on the map.

put (something) on the table

- to make something the topic of discussion

We put the issue of the new schedule on the table for discussion.

put (something) over on (someone)

- to fool or trick someone

The man was trying to put something over on his boss when he said that he was sick and could not come to work.

put (something) past (someone)

- to be surprised by what someone does (usually used in the negative)

I would not put it past my friend to try and change jobs for the second time this year.

put (something) plainly

- to state something firmly and clearly

My supervisor put his ideas plainly when we gathered for the monthly meeting.

put (something) straight

- to clarify something

I tried to put our communication problems straight when I met my friend last evening.

put (something) to good use

- to be able to use something effectively

We were able to put the new computer to good use when we bought it.

put (something) to rest

- to put an end to a rumor, to finish dealing with a problem and forget about it

I want to put the rumor to rest that I will soon leave my company.

put (something) together or put together (something)

- to consider some facts about something and arrive at a conclusion

The police were able to put the boy's story together after they interviewed him.

put (somewhere) on the map

- to make a place well-known

The new museum has put our city on the map.

put the bite on (someone)

- to ask someone for money or favors

The man is always trying to put the bite on his friends to collect money for charity.

put the blame on (someone)

- to blame someone

The teacher put the blame on the young boys for breaking the school desks.

put the cart before the horse

- to do things in the wrong or usual order

I think that my friend is putting the cart before the horse to talk about remodeling the house before he buys it.

put the finger on (someone)

- to accuse someone, to identify someone as the one who did something

The woman put the finger on the young man and said that he took the DVD player.

put the heat/squeeze on (someone)

- to put pressure on someone

The hospital is putting the heat on the insurance company to make them pay the insurance money.

The bank put the squeeze on the man to make him pay back his loan.

put the kibosh on (something)

- to put an end to something

I put the kibosh on my friend's idea to change our travel plans.

put the record straight

- to correct any false ideas by giving the true facts

The politician tried to put the record straight about the scandal.

put the screws to (someone)

- to try to force someone to do or say what you want

The police put the screws to the criminal to try and get some information from him.

put the words into (someone's) mouth

- to say or suggest something for someone else, to speak for someone else without his or her permission

My friend always wants to put the words into my mouth before I have a chance to speak.

put two and two together

- to understand or figure something out after learning all the facts

I put two and two together and realized why my boss was absent last month.

put up a good fight/struggle

- to try hard, to struggle hard

Our team put up a good fight but we were unable to win the game.

put up a brave/good front

- to pretend to be happy, to fool people about one's feelings

My friend always puts up a good front but actually he is very unhappy.

put up at a hotel/motel

- to stay at a hotel or motel

We decided to put up at a hotel and continue driving the next day.

put up money for (something)

- to provide money for something

The telephone company put up much money for the new science center.

put up or shut up

- to prove or do something or stop saying it, to bet money on what one says or stop saying it

The politician was forced to put up or shut up over his plans to build a new convention center.

put up (something) or put (something) up

- to build a building/sign/fence/wall

They are putting up some new apartments near our house.

put up with (someone or something)

- to patiently accept or endure someone or something

The man makes a great effort to put up with his wife's complaints.

put upon by (someone)

- to be taken advantage of

I am always put upon by my boss to do more work than the other members of the staff.

put words in/into (someone's) mouth

- to say or suggest something for someone else, to speak for someone else without his or her permission

The man always puts words into his wife's mouth which makes her angry.

putty in (someone's) hands

- to be easily influenced by someone else

The children are like putty in the hands of the new teacher.

puzzle (something) out or puzzle out (something)

- to try to figure something out

We spent much time trying to puzzle out a solution to our problem.

Q

quake in one's boots

- to be afraid, to shake from fear

I was quaking in my boots when my boss told me to come to his office.

queer as a three-dollar bill

- to be very strange

The woman is the strangest person that I have ever met. She is as queer as a three-dollar bill.

quick and dirty

- fast and cheap, fast and careless

The method that the company chose to cut expenses was quick and dirty.

quick as a flash

- very quickly

I left the house as quick as a flash and went to work.

quick as a wink

- very quickly

The woman turned around and quick as a wink her purse was stolen.

quick as greased lightning

- very quickly, very fast

The cat climbed up the tree as quick as greased lightning.

quick on the draw

- to be able to respond to something quickly, to be quick to draw a gun and shoot

The man is quick on the draw and can answer most questions very quickly.

quick on the trigger

- to be quick to respond to something, to be quick to draw a gun and shoot

The man was too quick on the trigger and should have thought more carefully about what he was going to do.

quick on the uptake

- to be quick to understand something

The student is quick on the uptake and understands most scientific theories quickly.

quiet as a mouse

- very quiet, shy and silent

The little boy was quiet as a mouse as he moved around the kitchen.

quite a bit

- much or many

I had quite a bit of time so I went to the library.

quite a few

- many

The boy has quite a few DVDs at home.

quite a lot

- much or many

There are quite a lot of people in the meeting hall.

quite a number

- much or many

Quite a number of the teachers agreed to use the new textbooks.

quite a (something)

- definitely something

The girl is quite a pianist and everybody loves her.

quote a price

- to state in advance the charge for doing or supplying something

I asked the moving company to quote a price to move our furniture.

R

a race against time

- a rush to beat a deadline

It was a race against time to rescue the miners who were trapped in the mine.

rack one's brains

- to try hard to think of something or remember something

I have been racking my brains all day trying to remember the man's name.

racked with pain

- to be suffering from severe pain

The man was racked with pain after he fell from the ladder.

rail at (someone) about (something)

- to complain loudly to someone about something

The customer was railing at the clerk about the bad service.

rain cats and dogs

- to rain very hard

It has been raining cats and dogs all morning.

a rain check

- a free ticket to an event that replaces a ticket that has been cancelled because of rain or for some other reason

We received a rain check for the concert that was suddenly cancelled.

a rain check

- a promise to repeat an invitation at a later date

I did not have time to go to the restaurant with my friend so I decided to take a rain check.

rain on (someone's) parade

- to spoil someone's plans

I tried not to let my friend's bad mood rain on my parade during the concert.

rain or shine

- no matter whether it rains or the sun shines

We plan to go to the beach tomorrow rain or shine.

rain (something) out or rain out (something)

- to spoil something by raining

The music festival was rained out yesterday evening.

raise Idioms

raise a fuss

- to make trouble, to cause a disturbance

The woman at the restaurant raised a fuss when her meal arrived late.

raise a hand against (someone or something)

- to hit or threaten to hit someone or something

If the man raises a hand against his supervisor the police will be called.

raise a stink about (something)

- to make a major issue out of something

The small business owners began to raise a stink about the new parking tax.

raise an objection to (someone or something)

- to object to someone or something

My friend raised an objection to my plan to include my parents in our travel plans.

raise Cain

- to create a disturbance, to cause trouble

The boys began to raise Cain at the dance and were asked to leave.

raise eyebrows

- to cause surprise or disapproval

It raised eyebrows when the woman appeared at the party with no invitation.

raise havoc with (someone or something)

- to create confusion or disruption for or against someone or something

The bad weather raised havoc with our plans to clean up the area around our house.

raise hell with (someone or something)

- to make trouble, to behave wildly

The woman began to raise hell with her supervisor after she learned about the new policy.

raise one's sights

- to set higher goals for oneself

Our team is doing very well and we are now raising our sights on the city championship.

raise one's voice to (someone)

- to speak loudly or shout at someone in anger

The teacher asked the child not to raise his voice.

to be raised in a barn

- to behave crudely like a barnyard animal

When the boy did not shut the door his mother asked him if he had been raised in a barn.

rake in the money

- to make a lot of money

My cousin's new pizza restaurant is raking in the money.

rake (someone) over the coals

- to scold or reprimand someone

My boss raked me over the coals when he heard about the lost sales report.

rake (something) off or rake off (something)

- to take money from something illegally

The sales clerk was accused of raking money off the daily cash sales.

rally around (someone or something)

- to come together to support someone or something

Everybody in the small town began to rally around the mayor when he was accused of wrongdoing.

ram (something) down (someone's) throat

- to force someone to do or agree to something that is not wanted

Our teacher always tries to ram her ideas down our throats which makes us angry.

ramble on about (someone or something)

- to talk aimlessly and endlessly about someone or something

My friend spent the evening rambling on about his problems at work.

rank and file

- the members of a group and not the leaders, regular soldiers and not the officers

The rank and file of the large union were happy with their new contract.

rant and rave about (someone or something)

- to shout angrily and wildly about someone or something

The man was ranting and raving about the bad service at the restaurant.

rant (at someone) about (someone or something)

- to talk in a loud and violent way about someone or something

The customer began ranting at her friend while they were shopping for shoes.

rap (someone's) knuckles

- to punish someone slightly

The company rapped the man's knuckles for taking a long coffee break.

rap with (someone)

- to talk or chat with someone

I passed the morning rapping with my friend at the park.

raring/rarin' to go

- to be extremely eager to do something

Everybody was rarin' to go after the speech by our company president.

rat on (someone)

- to betray someone by telling someone else about illegal or wrong activities

The boy ratted on his friend who broke the store window.

rat out on (someone)

- to desert or betray someone, to leave someone at a critical time

The boy's friend ratted out on him and refused to support him in his fight with the neighborhood bully.

rat race

- an endless hurried existence, a fierce struggle for success

The man finds it too much of a rat race to live and work in a big city.

rate with (someone)

- to be in someone's favor

My friend does not rate with some of the students at my school.

rattle (something) off or rattle off (something)

- to recite something quickly and accurately

The little boy was able to rattle off most countries in the world.

ravished with delight

- to be overcome with happiness or delight

I was ravished with delight when my friend decided to get married.

a raw deal

- unfair treatment

The man got a raw deal when he was forced to resign from his company.

reach a compromise

- to achieve a compromise with someone

The company tried very hard to reach a compromise with the workers.

reach a deal

- to complete or make a deal

The company reached a deal with their supplier.

reach a stalemate

- to arrive at a position where no progress is being made

The talks to buy the new computers have reached a stalemate and it will be difficult to start them again.

reach an agreement

- to complete or make an agreement

The city was not able to reach an agreement on where to build the new subway line.

reach an impasse

- to get to a point where progress is impossible

The negotiations on where to build the new bridge have reached an impasse.

reach first base with (someone or something)

- to make a major advance with someone or something

The salesperson was unable to reach first base with the buyer.

reach for the sky

- to set one's goals high

The young woman was reaching for the sky when she began to look for her first job.

reach one's stride

- to do something at one's best level of ability

The woman has finally reached her stride as a very good sales representative.

read Idioms

read between the lines

- to find a hidden meaning in something

I can read between the lines and I know what my friend is trying to say.

read (someone) his or her rights

- to make or read the required statement of legal rights to a person who has been arrested

The police officer read the bank robber his rights when he was arrested.

read (someone) like an open book

- to understand someone very well

The girl can read her boyfriend like an open book.

read (someone's) mind

- to guess what someone is thinking

It is very difficult to read the mind of my boss and know what she wants me to do.

read (something) into (something)

- to attach a new or different meaning to something

We were told not to read anything into the recent actions of our company.

read (something) over or read over (something)

- to read something (usually a second time)

I read my presentation over before I delivered it to the class.

I read over my email before I sent it.

read (something) through or read through (something)

- to read all of something

I read the report through before I returned it to my supervisor.

read the handwriting on the wall

- to anticipate what is going to happen by observing small hints and clues

Everybody in our department could read the handwriting on the wall and they knew that the company would soon close our department.

read the riot act (to someone)

- to give someone a strong warning or scolding

The teacher read the riot act to her students when they began to misbehave in class.

read up on (someone or something)

- to research and read about someone or something

I have been reading up on Egyptian history before our trip to Egypt this summer.

ready for the scrap heap

- ready to be discarded or thrown away

I think that our old car is ready for the scrap heap.

ready, willing, and able

- to be eager or willing to do something

Everybody in the small town is ready, willing, and able to help the family who lost their house in the fire.

real McCoy

- the genuine thing

My new camera is the real McCoy and it will let me take any kind of picture that I want.

the real thing

- something that is genuine and not an imitation

The small vase is the real thing and it is very valuable.

the reality of the situation

- the way that a situation really is

The reality of the situation is that it is very difficult to enter that university.

rear its ugly head

- something unpleasant appears or becomes obvious after being hidden

The problem of mold has reared its ugly head in our house again.

receive (someone) with open arms

- to greet someone eagerly

The citizens received the Olympic athletes with open arms.

reckon with (someone or something)

- to confront and deal with someone or something

I do not know how I will reckon with any more problems with my car.

recognize (someone or something) for what it/he/she is

- to see and understand exactly what someone or something is or represents

Everyone was able to recognize our new principal for what he is. He is a very difficult person to work with.

reconcile oneself to (something)

- to begin to feel comfortable with a bad or challenging situation

We have to reconcile ourselves to the fact that our school will close next year.

red herring

- something that draws attention away from the matter that is under consideration
The issue of salary is a red herring and is not related to the main issues of the negotiations.

red in the face

- to be embarrassed

The woman was red in the face after she dropped her keys down the elevator shaft.

red-letter day

- a day that is memorable because of some important event

Saturday was a red-letter day when we finally won the school championship.

red tape

- excessive formalities in official transactions

There was much red tape when we went to the city to get a business license.

reduced to (something)

- to be brought into a humble condition or state

The building was reduced to ashes after the terrible fire.

reel off (something) or reel (something) off

- to recite something quickly and accurately

I tried hard to reel off all of the events of the past week.

refer to (someone or something)

- to direct attention to someone or something

The man referred to a letter that he had previously written.

refill a prescription

- to sell a second set of medicine on a doctor's orders

I went to the pharmacy to refill a prescription for my mother.

regain one's composure

- to become calm and composed after a stressful event

The woman took several hours to regain her composure after the fight with her husband.

regain one's feet

- to stand up again after falling or stumbling

My father quickly regained his feet after falling on the sidewalk.

regardless of (something)

- without considering or thinking about something, without regard to something

Regardless of the weather we will go fishing tomorrow.

regular as clockwork

- to be very dependable and regular

The bus comes by our house as regular as clockwork every morning.

a regular guy

- a friendly person who everyone gets along with

The mayor of the city is a regular guy and is well-liked by most people.

reinvent the wheel

- to recreate something that already exists

Our supervisor always wants to reinvent the wheel and do many things two times even when it is not necessary.

reject (something) out of hand

- to decide without thinking about it not to accept an idea or argument or plan

The mayor of the city rejected the idea out of hand.

relative to (someone or something)

- in proportion to someone or something

The house was not very large relative to the amount of money that it cost.

reliance on (someone or something)

- trust and dependence on someone or something

I think that my father has too much reliance on his business partner and it is causing him problems.

religious about (doing something)

- to be strict about doing something

My father is religious about brushing his teeth before he goes to bed at night.

reluctant to (do something)

- to not want to do something

The surgeon was reluctant to operate on the young boy.

remains to be seen

- it is not yet known or decided

It remains to be seen who will come to the party this evening.

reminiscent of (someone or something)

- to remind someone of someone or something, to seem like someone or something

The music festival is reminiscent of the large music festivals of fifty years ago.

reputed to be/do something

- to be thought to do or be or have something

The new police chief is reputed to be the best police chief in the country.

resign oneself to (something)

- to accept something reluctantly

I must resign myself to the fact that I will probably not get the job that I want.

resonate with (someone)

- to appeal to someone or cause someone to like something

The idea of a film festival resonated with most members of the community.

the responsible party

- the person or organization responsible or liable for something

The responsible party for the accident was taken away by the police for questioning.

rest assured

- to be assured, to be certain

"You can rest assured that I will be at work early every morning this week."

rest in peace

- to lie dead peacefully for eternity

We prayed that my aunt would rest in peace after she passed away.

rest on one's laurels

- to be satisfied with the success that one has already achieved

My boss is always willing to work hard and does not try to rest on his laurels.

result in (something)

- to cause something to happen

The bad road conditions resulted in many accidents this morning.

return the compliment

- to pay a compliment to someone who has paid you a compliment

I returned the compliment to my colleague when he began to praise my work.

return the favor

- to do a good deed for someone who has done a good deed for you

I returned the favor to my friend who had helped me move to my new apartment.

rev (something) up or rev up (something)

- to make an engine run very fast

The young man began to rev the motor of his car up while he was waiting for his friend.

rhyme or reason

- a good plan or reason, a reasonable purpose or explanation (usually used in negative or interrogative or conditional sentences)

There was no rhyme or reason as to why my friend suddenly quit his job.

rich in (something)

- to have valuable resources or characteristics or traditions or history

Many vegetables are rich in important vitamins.

ride herd on (someone)

- to watch closely and control someone

The new supervisor likes to ride herd on the people who work for him.

ride off in all directions

- to try to do everything at once, to behave in a totally confused manner

After the meeting everyone seemed to ride off in all directions and we did not know where anyone was going.

ride on (someone's) coattails

- to have one's fortune or success depend on another person

The sales manager was riding on the coattails of his boss and hoped to achieve success in the company.

ride roughshod over (someone or something)

- to treat someone or something with disdain or scorn

The new teacher is riding roughshod over the needs of the students.

ride shotgun

- to travel in the front seat of a car or truck, to protect or guard something when it is being transported

I rode shotgun with the farmer as he looked at his fields.

ride (something) out or ride out (something)

- to endure something unpleasant, to survive something safely

We were able to ride out the storm by staying in a small restaurant.

ride the gravy train

- to exploit something for easy profit or advantage, to experience excessive success or profit without deserving it

We have been able to ride the gravy train and make much money at our job recently.

riding for a fall

- to be risking failure or an accident due to overconfidence

My friend is riding for a fall if he continues his present attitude at his job.

riding high

- to be enjoying great popularity, to be attracting attention

The new government has been riding high in the opinion polls for several months now.

right Idioms**right and left**

- on both sides, on all sides, everywhere

The child looked right and left before he crossed the road.

right as rain

- to be correct, to be genuine

The figures that I gave to my supervisor are as right as rain.

right at (a specific time/place)

- to be exactly at a specific time or place

The concert started right at 9:00 PM.

right away

- immediately

"I forgot to bring my book but I will go home and get it right away."

right down (someone's) alley

- to be ideally suited to someone's interests or abilities

The webpage development project was right down my alley and I was very happy to do it.

right off the bat

- immediately, from the beginning

I told my boss right off the bat that we did not need a new computer for the office.

right on

- that's right, yes (indicates approval for something)

The man yelled "right on" every time the politician promised to lower taxes.

right on time

- to be exactly at the correct time

The train arrived at the station right on time.

right out

- to say or tell something plainly or in a way that hides nothing

I told the new supervisor right out that I did not like him.

right side up

- with the correct side upwards

The bus drove off the highway and rolled over but it landed right side up when it stopped.

right under one's nose

- to be in an obvious or nearby place

I found the calculator right under my nose after searching for it for an hour.

right up (someone's) alley

- to be ideally suited to someone's interests or abilities

Working with numbers is right up my alley.

ring a bell

- to remind someone of something

The name does not ring a bell and I am sure that I have never heard of the man.

ring down the curtain on (something)

- to bring something to an end

The famous singer rang down the curtain on an evening of wonderful music.

ring in the New Year

- to celebrate the beginning of the new year

We decided to ring in the New Year at my parent's house.

ring true

- to sound or seem true or likely

The predictions by the scientists are beginning to ring true.

ring up (someone) or ring (someone) up

- to telephone someone

You should ring up the police if you see a strange person around your house.

ring up (something) or ring (something) up

- to add and record a sale on a cash register

I went to the cash register so the clerk could ring up the items that I had bought.

rip into (someone or something)

- to attack someone or something physically or verbally

My mother ripped into me when I came home late from the party.

rip off (someone or something) or rip (someone or something) off

- to cheat or rob someone or something

The mechanic at the gas station ripped me off.

ripe old age

- a very old age

My uncle lived to a ripe old age.

a ripple of excitement

- a series of quiet but excited whispers

There was a ripple of excitement in the concert hall when the singer walked onto the stage.

a ripple of protest

- a small amount of quiet protest

There was only a ripple of protest when the government raised the gasoline tax.

Rise and shine!

- Get out of bed and begin the day!

"Rise and shine!" my father called to me in the morning.

rise to the bait

- to be lured by some kind of bait or enticement

My friend rose to the bait when I offered to help him if he would help me.

rise to the occasion

- to meet the challenge of something

Our teacher rose to the occasion and gave a very good speech at the banquet.

a risk of rain/showers/thunderstorms

- a chance of rain or showers or thunderstorms

There was a risk of showers so we decided not to go on a picnic today.

risk one's neck to (do something)

- to risk physical harm in order to do something

I risked my neck in order to rescue the cat from the roof.

rivet (someone's) attention

- to keep someone's attention fixed on something

The man riveted our attention as he continued to climb up the side of the tall building.

a road-hog

- a driver who uses more than his share of the road

My father became angry at the road-hog who was in front of our car.

rob Peter to pay Paul

- to take something from one person or thing to pay another

When the government began to take money from the education system to pay for the medical system it was like robbing Peter to pay Paul.

rob the cradle

- to marry a person much younger than oneself

Everybody said that my boss was robbing the cradle when he married the young woman at our company.

rock the boat

- to upset the way things are

The woman is a very quiet worker and never likes to rock the boat.

roll around

- to return at a regular or usual time, to come back

Every time that my birthday rolls around I have a big party.

roll back (a price)

- to reduce a price to a previous amount

The prices at the computer store were rolled back during the big sale.

roll in

- to arrive in great numbers or quantity

The money has been rolling in since we started the new business.

roll out a product

- to release a product for sale

The company will roll out their new computers soon.

roll out the red carpet

- to welcome an important guest by putting a red carpet down for him or her to walk on
They rolled out the red carpet when the Queen came for a visit.

roll out the red carpet

- to make a big effort to greet and entertain someone
Whenever I visit my aunt she rolls out the red carpet for me.

roll up one's sleeves

- to prepare to work hard or seriously at something
Everybody in our club rolled up their sleeves to help prepare for the party.

to be rolling in (something)

- to have large amounts of something (usually money)
My friend is rolling in money and never has to work.

a rolling stone

- a person who does not live or work in one place
The man is a rolling stone and I never know where to find him.

room and board

- food to eat and a place to live
The young man received room and board as part of his salary.

root for (someone or something)

- to cheer and encourage someone or something
I have been rooting for our hometown team since I was a child.

root (something) out or root out (something)

- to get rid of something completely
The new city government is trying to root out the wasteful practices of the previous government.

rooted in (something)

- to be based on something
The popularity of the politician is rooted in his strong moral values and honesty.

rooted to the spot

- to be unable to move because of fear or surprise
The boy was rooted to the spot as he watched the dog attack the rabbit.

rope (someone) into (doing something)

- to persuade or pressure someone to do something
I roped my friend into helping me wash my car.

rotten to the core

- to be completely no good and worthless
The local government was rotten to the core and everyone was happy when they were voted out of office.

rough-and-ready

- to be rough or crude but to be ready for something
The boat was rough-and-ready so we decided to take it for a ride.

rough-and-tumble

- to be rough, a hard fighting or arguing style that does not follow any rules or laws
It was a rough-and-tumble meeting at the city planning office last night.

a rough guess

- an approximate estimate or guess
I made a rough guess about how many people would come to the party.

rough it

- to live in uncomfortable conditions without the usual comforts (such as on a camping trip)
We were forced to rough it for a few days when the storm knocked out the electricity supply.

rough seas ahead

- many difficulties and challenges are coming in the near future

It appears that there will be rough seas ahead in the economy.

rough up (someone) or rough (someone) up

- to attack or hurt someone physically

The three men roughed up the waiter at the hotel and were arrested by the police.

round Idioms

round off (something) or round (something) off

- to change a number to the next higher or lower whole number

We rounded off the figure as it was much too big.

round out (something) or round (something) out

- to finish something by doing something special

We rounded out the celebration with a meal in a restaurant.

round-robin letter

- a letter written by a group of people with each person writing part of the letter

We sent a round-robin letter to the other members of the staff to try and get help for the annual flea market.

round-robin meeting/discussion/debate

- a meeting or discussion in which each person in a group takes part

We had a round-robin panel discussion on what we could do to help protect the environment.

round-robin tournament/contest

- a game or contest in which each player or team plays every other player or team in turn

A round-robin tournament was held in order to choose the best team in the city.

round-trip ticket

- a train or bus or plane ticket that allows one to go to the destination and then later return home

We purchased a round-trip ticket because it was cheaper than a one-way ticket.

round up (someone or something) or round (someone or something) up

- to bring together or collect someone or something

We were able to round up enough people to play a game of soccer last night.

royal treatment

- very good treatment

My parents receive the royal treatment when they go to visit their relatives.

rub Idioms

rub elbows/shoulders with (someone)

- to be in the same place as other people, to meet and mix with other people

At the party we were able to rub shoulders with many important people.

rub in (something) or rub (something) in

- to move over something using some pressure in order to put some cream or ointment or oil onto something

I rubbed in the ointment onto my skin.

rub in (something) or rub (something) in

- to talk or joke about something that someone said or did

"I know that I made a mistake but you should not rub it in."

rub off on (someone)

- to transmit a characteristic of one person to someone else

The woman's habit of talking all the time has rubbed off on her daughter.

rub out (someone or something) or rub (someone or something) out

- to destroy something completely, to kill or eliminate someone

The government troops rubbed out the entire village.

rub salt in (someone's) wound

- to deliberately make someone's unhappiness or shame or misfortune worse

My supervisor rubbed salt in my wound when he continued to criticize me for my mistake.

rub (someone) the wrong way

- to irritate others with something that one says or does, to make someone dislike you

The woman's rude behavior always rubs me the wrong way.

rub (someone's) nose in it

- to remind someone of something that he or she has done wrong

Our supervisor always likes to rub our nose in it if we make a mistake.

rub (something) off or rub off (something)

- to remove something by rubbing, to erase something

The teacher rubbed off the writing on the whiteboard.

ruffle feathers

- to point feathers outward (used for a bird)

The bird ruffled its feathers as the cat approached the cage.

ruffle (someone's) feathers

- to upset or annoy someone

I do not want to ruffle my friend's feathers as he is in a bad mood today.

ruin of (someone or something)

- the cause of someone's destruction or failure

I think that the poor business skills of my uncle will be the ruin of him.

a rule of thumb

- a basic or accepted pattern or rule

It is a rule of thumb in the fire department that nobody goes into a burning building by themselves.

rule out (someone or something) or rule (someone or something) out

- to decide against someone or something, to eliminate someone or something

The team has not ruled out using the new player during the tournament.

rule the roost

- to be the dominant figure in a family

The woman seems rather quiet but she rules the roost in her family.

rump session

- a meeting held after a larger meeting

After the convention, I attended a rump session which was very interesting.

run Idioms

run a fever/temperature

- to have a body temperature higher than normal

The little boy was running a fever so his parents decided to call the doctor.

run a risk of (something)

- to be open to danger or loss

You run a risk of going to jail if you drive after drinking.

run a tight ship

- to run an organization or one's life or a ship in an orderly and disciplined manner

My friend runs a tight ship and makes few mistakes in his life.

run across (someone or something)

- to meet someone unexpectedly, to find something unexpectedly

I ran across an old friend in the library.

I ran across an interesting story in today's newspaper.

run afoul of (someone or something)

- to get into trouble with someone or something

The young man ran afoul of the law and got into much trouble.

run after (someone) or (something)

- to chase someone

The young boys ran after the small dog.

run an ad

- to place or put an advertisement in a publication

The government will run an ad to tell the public about the new gas tax.

run an errand

- to take a short trip to do a specific thing

I was late for work because I had to run an errand in the morning.

run around

- to go to various places to do things

We ran around all day and now we are very tired.

run around in circles

- to act confused, to do a lot but accomplish little

I have been running around in circles all day but I cannot seem to get anything done.

run around like a chicken with its head cut off

- to be in a state of chaos, to run around with what seems to be no purpose

I spent the morning running around like a chicken with its head cut off when I heard that my mother was in the hospital.

run around (something)

- to run in circles around something

The little boy ran around the table.

run around with (someone)

- to be friends and do things with someone or with a group

My cousin's son is running around with a bad group of people.

run away

- to leave without permission, to escape

The cat ran away when I opened the door.

The little boy ran away when the store manager began to talk to him.

run away with (someone)

- to go away with someone, to elope (run away and get married) with someone

The girl ran away with her boyfriend and got married.

run away with (something)

- to take hold of someone

Their imagination ran away with them when the boys decided that they wanted to join the circus.

run away with (something)

- to take something quickly and secretly without permission or by stealing it

Someone ran away with the new computer so now we do not have one.

run away with (something)

- to be much better than others, to win easily

Our hometown team ran away with the football championship.

run circles/rings around (someone)

- to outrun or outdo someone

The young boy can run circles around the others in his school.

run counter to (something)

- to be in opposition to something

The actions of the manager run counter to what he says that he believes.

run down (someone or something) or run (someone or something) down

- to crash against and knock down someone or something

A car ran down my dog last week.

run down (someone) or run (someone) down

- to say bad things about someone, to criticize someone

The girl is always running down her friends. That is why nobody likes her.

to be run down

- to get into poor health or condition, to look bad

My friend has become run down since she started working at night.

run for it

- to dash for safety, to make a speedy escape

When it started raining we ran for it and tried to get to the bus shelter.

run for one's life

- to run away to save one's life

I ran for my life when I met the bear on my camping trip.

run hot and cold

- to be sometimes good or useful or effective or positive and sometimes the opposite

The reviews of the new movie are running hot and cold and I do not know if I will go and see it.

run in (somewhere)

- to make a brief visit or stop somewhere

I ran in to see my sister at her office before I left for the weekend.

run in the family

- to be a common family characteristic

Being a left-handed golfer runs in our family.

run interference

- to intervene on behalf of someone in order to protect him or her from something (from American football)

The company ran interference on their top salesman to protect him from the scandal.

run into a brick wall

- to come to a barrier against further progress

I always run into a brick wall when I try to talk to my boss about a work problem.

run into (an amount of money or something)

- to add up to something, to total something, to amount to something

The damage from the storm will run into much money.

run into (someone)

- to meet someone by chance

I ran into my cousin when I was at the supermarket.

run into (someone or something)

- to hit someone or something, to crash into someone or something

The car ran into the truck on the highway.

run into (something)

- to mix with something, to join with something

During the hot weather the red paint ran into the white paint.

run into (something - a fact/difficulty/problems/trouble)

- to experience something, to encounter or meet something

I ran into trouble when I tried to cross the border with no visa.

I ran into several facts about dinosaurs last night.

run like clockwork

- to run or progress very well

The new production system runs like clockwork.

run low on (something)

- to near the end of a supply of something

We are running low on rice so I must buy some more.

run-of-the-mill

- ordinary, usual

The restaurant was in a run-of-the-mill building but the food was superb.

run off at the mouth

- to talk excessively

My classmate is always running off at the mouth about something.

run off copies of (something)

- to produce copies with a printing press or a copy machine

We ran off many copies of the poster for the festival.

run off with (someone)

- to go away with someone, to elope (run away and get married) with someone

My sister ran off with her boyfriend and got married when she was quite young.

run out of patience

- to become annoyed after being patient for a period of time

The mother has run out of patience with her son.

run out of (something)

- to use all of something

The car ran out of gas in the countryside.

run out of time

- to use up all the available time

We ran out of time at the meeting so we could not discuss the staffing issue.

run over (someone or something)

- to drive on top of someone or something

We ran over a rabbit on the way to the meeting.

run over (something)

- to be too full and flow over the edge

The water ran over the edge of the bathtub and made everything in the room wet.

run over (something)

- to read or go over something quickly, to practice something briefly

We will run over the material before the meeting.

run ragged

- to be tired or exhausted

The woman is being run ragged by her three children.

run rampant

- to be or grow out of control

The use of illegal taxis is running rampant in our city.

run riot/wild

- to be out of control

The soccer fans ran riot after the game.

run scared

- to behave as if one were going to fail or lose

The politician has been running scared in his attempt to win re-election.

run short of (something)

- to not have enough of something

We ran short of money during our trip to Europe.

run (someone) in or run in (someone)

- to take someone to jail, to arrest someone

The police ran the man in for questioning about the robbery.

run (someone) out or run out (someone)

- to force someone to leave, to expel someone

The police ran the drug dealers out of town.

run (something) by (someone) again

- to say something again

I asked my colleague to run his ideas by me again.

run (something) into the ground

- to use something more than is wanted or needed, to neglect something

The man ran his car into the ground and had to buy another one.

run the gauntlet

- to face a hard test or painful experience

I had to run the gauntlet of many interviews before I got the job.

run the good race

- to do the best that one can

The politician ran the good race but in the end he lost the election.

run the show

- to be in charge

My uncle runs the show at his company.

run through (money or something)

- to spend money recklessly, to use up something wastefully

We ran through a lot of money when we bought furniture for our new apartment.

run through (something)

- to read or practice something from the beginning to the end without stopping

I usually try to run through my speech a couple of times before I have to give it.

run to (an amount of money)

- to amount to a certain amount of money

The cost of repairing my car may run to more money than I can pay.

run to seed

- to become worn-out and uncared for

The small store has run to seed and few people like to go there now.

run up

- to add to the amount of something

We ran up a large bill at the department store before we went home.

run up against (something)

- to encounter something

The city ran up against many problems when they were building the highway.

run up (something) or run (something) up

- to pull something up on a rope

We ran up the flag early this morning before the parade began.

run up to (someone or something)

- to approach someone or something by running

The dog ran up to the little boy.

run wild

- to be or go out of control

The crowd ran wild after the soccer game.

run with (something)

- to implement something (to take a ball in a football game and run with it)

My boss took my idea and ran with it.

to be running high

- to have one's feelings in a state of excitement or anger

Feelings about the train accident are running high and the government must explain what happened.

a rush on (something)

- a large demand for something

There was a rush on candles when the electricity was off for three days.

Russian roulette

- a game of chance in which one bullet is placed in a revolver and the cartridge is spun and the player aims the gun at his head and pulls the trigger

The men in the movie played Russian roulette until one of them finally died.

Russian roulette

- a potentially dangerous situation

Putting the dangerous chemicals on the old ship was like playing a game of Russian roulette.

rustle (something) up or rustle up (something)

- to find and prepare some food or something

We went home after the game and began to rustle up some dinner.

S

sack out

- to go to bed, to go to sleep

I sacked out as soon as I arrived home last evening.

a sacred cow

- something that is never criticized even if it sometimes deserves to be

The national park system is a sacred cow of the government and is never criticized by anyone.

sadder but wiser

- unhappy about something but having learned something from the experience

The man was sadder but wiser after he learned that his wallet had been stolen.

saddle (someone) with (something)

- to give someone something undesirable or difficult to deal with

I try not to saddle my friend with my financial problems.

safe and sound

- to be safe or healthy

We arrived at our destination safe and sound after a long journey.

a safe bet

- something that is almost one hundred percent certain

It is a safe bet that our boss will not come to work today.

(to be on the) safe side

- to take no chances

It may rain so to be on the safe side I think that I will bring my umbrella.

safety in numbers

- to feel safe by being surrounded by a large number of people

There was safety in numbers when the students went to complain about their new teacher.

sage advice

- very good and wise advice

My friend asked me for my sage advice regarding his problems.

sail into (someone)

- to scold or criticize someone very hard, to attack someone

When I entered the office my supervisor sailed into me for being late.

sail right through (something)

- to finish something quickly and easily

I was able to sail right through the material for my final exam.

sail under false colors

- to pretend to be something that one is not

The politician was sailing under false colors when he appealed to the citizens for votes.

salt away money

- to save money

My friend has salted away much money from her new job.

salt of the earth

- basically and fundamentally good simple people

The members of our club are the salt of the earth and are fun to be with.

same as (someone or something)

- to be identical to someone or something

My sister is the same as the girl who lives down the block.

Same here!

- Me too! I agree!

"Same here," I replied when someone said that they were having problems with their Internet provider.

same old story

- something that occurs in the same way as before

It is the same old story with my friend. He borrows money but he never wants to pay it back.

same to you

- the same comment applies to you

"The same to you," the boy said when his friend said that he was stupid.

sands of time

- the accumulated tiny amounts of time (like the sand in an hourglass)

The sands of time have done much to change the woman's feelings about her sister.

save face

- to preserve one's good reputation or dignity when something has happened to hurt it

Our boss is responsible for many problems in our company. He wants to quit before he is fired so that he can save face.

save one's breath

- to remain silent because talking will do no good

You should save your breath and not talk to that woman because she will not believe you anyway.

save one's neck/skin

- to save oneself from danger or trouble

The man left the scene of the fire quickly in order to save his neck.

save (something) for a rainy day

- to save something (eg. money) for the future

I plan to save some money for a rainy day.

save the day

- to bring about victory or success (when defeat is likely)

The football player saved the day for his team when he played his best game of the season.

save up for (something)

- to save money in order to buy something

My friend is saving up for a new digital camera.

saved by the bell

- to be rescued from a difficult situation by something that brings the situation to a sudden end

I was saved by the bell and do not have to give my presentation until tomorrow.

saving grace

- a redeeming quality - especially a quality that compensates for one's shortcomings

The man's saving grace was his musical ability. His personality was terrible.

say Idioms

say a mouthful

- to say something of great importance/meaning/length

"You certainly said a mouthful," I said when my friend began to tell me about his complaint.

say grace

- to say a prayer of thanks before or after a meal

The bride's father wanted to say grace before the wedding banquet.

say one's piece

- to say openly what one thinks

I said my piece at the meeting and then quietly left.

say (something) in a roundabout way

- to say something indirectly

I said what I wanted to say in a roundabout way in order to make my point.

say (something) to (someone's) face

- to say something (often unpleasant) directly to someone

My supervisor always complains about me but she never says anything to my face.

say (something) under one's breath

- to say something so softly that almost nobody can hear it

The woman said something under her breath but I could not understand it.

say the word

- to give a sign, to show a wish

"Just say the word and I will come and meet you at the airport."

say uncle

- to surrender, to give in

The little boy was forced to say uncle and do what the older boy wanted.

scale (something) down

- to make something smaller

The government decided to scale down the plans for the sports stadium.

scare (someone) out of his or her wits

- to frighten someone very much

The dog scared the little boy out of his wits.

scare (someone) silly

- to frighten someone very much

The mouse scared the girl silly.

scare (someone) stiff

- to scare someone severely

The little boy was scared stiff after he watched the horror movie.

scare the (living) daylights out of (someone)

- to frighten someone very much

Falling off the bicycle scared the daylights out of the little girl.

The movie scared the living daylights out of me.

scare the pants off (someone)

- to frighten someone very badly

The big dog scared the pants off the little boy.

scare up (somebody or something) or scare (somebody or something) up

- to find someone or something, to gather something with some effort

We were able to scare up some sleeping bags so that we could go camping.

scared silly/stiff

- to be frightened very much

I was scared stiff during the horror movie.

scatter (something) around

- to carelessly put something in different places

My papers are always scattered around my house and I am never able to find them.

school of hard knocks

- the ordinary experiences of life

The man learned about life in the school of hard knocks.

school of thought

- a particular philosophy

There are many schools of thought about how the government should proceed with its new transportation plan.

score points with (someone)

- to gain the favor of someone

The salesman always worked extra hours in order to score points with his boss.

scout around for (someone or something)

- to search or look for someone or something

The company is scouting around for a new warehouse for their products.

scrape the bottom of the barrel

- to take whatever is left after the best has been taken

The company is scraping the bottom of the barrel to look for new employees.

scrape (something) together or scrape together (something)

- to gather small amounts of money or something (usually with some difficulty) for some purpose

We were able to scrape together enough money to go on a holiday.

scrape (something) up or scrape up (something)

- to find or gather something with some effort

My friend scraped up some money and came to visit me during the summer.

scratch around for (something)

- to look for something

The woman was scratching around for some money to buy some food.

scratch (someone's) back

- to do something for someone in the hope that they will do something for you

"You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours," the customer said when we talked about the new sales contract.

scratch the surface (of something)

- to only begin to do or learn something

My friend likes to listen to classical music but she is only beginning to scratch the surface of what is available.

scream bloody murder

- to complain bitterly about something

The woman screamed bloody murder when someone took her parking place.

screw around

- to loaf about, to pass time without doing anything

I screwed around all morning and did not get anything done.

screw up (someone or something) or screw (someone or something) up

- to cause trouble for someone or something, to make a mess of something

My travel agent screwed up my travel schedule and I missed my flight.

screw up one's courage

- to build up one's courage for something

I screwed up my courage and asked my supervisor to transfer me to a different department.

scrimp and save

- to be very thrifty, to save money for something

I have been scrimping and saving in order to buy a new computer.

scroll up/down

- to move up or down through the text on a computer screen

I scrolled down to read the rest of the online story.

scrounge around for (something)

- to look/search in many places for something

We did not have enough wood for the fence so we had to scrounge around to find some more.

seamy side of life

- the most unpleasant or roughest aspect of life

The policeman learned much about the seamy side of life during his many years of work.

search high and low for (someone or something)

- to look carefully everywhere for someone or something

I have been searching high and low for my address book.

Search me!

- I don't know., How should I know?

"Search me," my friend said when I asked him what had happened to his car.

search one's soul

- to study and think about one's reasons and actions to see if one has been fair and honest

I have been searching my soul to see if I could have prevented the car crash.

second a motion

- to formally agree with a proposal in a meeting

I seconded the motion to start one hour early every morning during the summer.

second-guess (someone)

- to try to guess what someone else intends to do or would have done in a situation

You should never try to second-guess the actions of the firefighters in a dangerous situation.

second hand

- not new, used by someone else

We went to a second-hand bookstore to look for the books.

second nature to (someone)

- to be easy and natural for someone

Playing a musical instrument is second nature to my friend.

second-rate

- to be not of the best quality

The performance of the school choir was second-rate.

a second thought

- a thought that one has after thinking about something again

I gave it a second thought and decided not to quit the class.

second to none

- to be better than everything else

The performance by the opera singer was second to none.

second wind

- energy that is regained after being tired

After we got our second wind we continued our hike up the mountain.

security against (something)

- something that keeps something safe, protection against something

The money in the bank is my security against losing my job in the future.

security blanket

- something that one holds onto for reassurance or comfort (like a child and a blanket)

The boy uses his computer as a security blanket so that he does not have to meet new people.

see Idioms

see a man about a dog

- to leave for some unspecified purpose (often to go to the restroom)

I drank several cups of coffee and I soon had to stop my car to see a man about a dog.

see about (something)

- to check into something

I am going to see about getting the book before next week.

see double

- to see two of everything instead of one

I began to see double after I hit my head on the edge of the fence.

see eye to eye (with someone)

- to agree with someone

I do not always see eye to eye with my friend.

see fit to (do something)

- to decide to do something

I hope that my company sees fit to spend more time training its employees.

see no objection to (something)

- to not have any objection to something

I see no objection to my friend coming to the meeting with me.

see one's way clear to (do something)

- to feel able to do something

"When you see your way clear to begin the job could you please come and tell me."

see red

- to become angry

My friend saw red last night when I told him about the broken DVD player.

see service

- to do military duty in an actual war

The man saw service in the war.

see (someone or something) as (something)

- to consider someone to be something

My friend sees me as an expert in financial matters although I am not.

see (someone) home

- to accompany someone home

I saw my cousin home after her visit last evening.

see (someone) off or see off (someone)

- to go with someone to their point of departure

I went to the airport to see my mother off.

see (someone) out or see out (someone)

- to go with someone out of a room or house

I went to the door to see our guests out.

see (someone) to (somewhere)

- to escort someone to a place safely

I saw my friend to the door when he decided to go home.

see (something) out or see out (something)

- to finish something, to not quit doing something

I decided to stay with my company in order to see out the restructuring process.

see (something) through

- to do something until it is completed

I want to stay and see the building project through.

see stars

- to think that one is seeing stars as a result of being hit on the head

When I was hit by the opposing player I fell to the ground and began to see stars.

see the color of (someone's) money

- to verify that someone has (enough) money

I did not give my friend a ticket for the game until I saw the color of his money.

see the handwriting on the wall

- to know that something is certain to happen

We saw the handwriting on the wall and we knew that our company was going to go bankrupt.

see the last of (someone or something)

- to see someone or something for the last time

I was very happy to see the last of my friend.

see the light

- to realize that one has been wrong

I finally saw the light and began to work in the same manner as everyone else.

see the light at the end of the tunnel

- to foresee an end to something such as a problem or a task

I could see the light at the end of the tunnel and I knew that I would finish the work soon.

see the light of day

- to be born, to begin

I do not believe that his plans to build a new house will ever see the light of day.

see the sights

- to see the important things in a place

We stopped for three days in the city so that we could see the sights.

see the world through rose-colored glasses

- to see only the good things about something, to be too optimistic

She is unrealistic and always sees the world through rose-colored glasses.

see things

- to imagine that one sees something that is not there

The boy is always daydreaming and imagines that he is seeing things.

see things/everything through rose-colored glasses

- to see only the good things about something, to be too optimistic

The girl is very nice although she always sees everything through rose-colored glasses.

see through (someone or something)

- to understand someone's true character or motivation, to understand the real reason for something

I could see through the supervisor's attempt to fire the woman from her job.

see to it (that something is done)

- to take the responsibility to do something, to make sure that something is done

"Will you please see to it that the garbage is taken out in the morning."

see to (someone or something)

- to take care of someone or something

I will see to renting a car tomorrow.

see which way the wind is blowing

- to determine what is the most suitable thing to do

I want to see which way the wind is blowing before I decide to quit my job.

seeing is believing

- one must believe something that one sees

Seeing is believing and I did not believe the size of the house until I actually saw it.

seize an opportunity

- to take advantage of an opportunity

I seized the opportunity to take the extra class when I heard about it.

seize upon (something)

- to take hold of something and make an issue of it
The media seized upon the mistake of the politician.

sell Idioms

sell like hotcakes

- to sell quickly, to sell rapidly

The tickets for the concert were selling like hotcakes when I called this morning.

sell out (someone or something) or sell (someone or something) out

- to be disloyal, to betray someone or something

The man does not want to sell out his moral values.

sell (someone) a bill of goods

- to deceive someone, to get someone to believe something that is not true

I believe that the salesman sold me a bill of goods and the product does not have much value.

sell (someone) on (something - a plan or idea)

- to convince someone that something is good or beneficial

I could not sell my friend on the idea to buy a new computer.

sell (someone) short

- to underestimate someone

My friend is selling himself short when he thinks that he will not be able to find a good job.

sell (something) out or sell out (something)

- to sell all of something

They sold out the concert in every city that it went to.

sell (something) for a song

- to sell something very cheaply

They sold the furniture for a song.

sell (something) off or sell off (something)

- to sell much or all of something

The computer company decided to sell off some of their real estate business.

sell (something) on credit

- to sell something now and let the purchaser pay for it later

The store sold the stereo system on credit.

seller's market

- a situation where there are more buyers of a product/service than sellers so the sellers have an advantage

It was a seller's market for houses and the houses were increasing in value.

send Idioms

send away for (something)

- to write a letter asking for something

I sent away for some information but it has not arrived yet.

send (someone) about his or her business

- to send someone away (in an unfriendly manner)

I sent the man about his business when he interrupted my work last evening.

send (someone) off or send off (someone)

- to participate in saying good-bye to someone who is leaving

We went to the airport to send off the company president.

send (someone) packing

- to tell someone to leave, to dismiss someone

The company sent the man packing because of his bad work performance.

send (someone) to the showers

- to send a player out of the game and off the field/court etc.

The coach decided to send the player to the showers after his poor performance in the game.

send (someone) up or send up (someone)

- to sentence someone to prison

The judge sent the man up for seven years for robbing a bank.

send (something) C.O.D.

- to send merchandise to someone who will pay for it when it is delivered

The company sent the computer printer C.O.D.

send up a trial balloon

- to suggest something and see how people react to it

The company sent up a trial balloon to see how people would react to their new product.

separate but equal

- to be segregated but of equal value or quality

The teaching staff and the administration were separate but equal regarding school decisions.

separate the men from the boys

- to separate competent people from less competent people

Some people say that joining the military is a good way to separate the men from the boys.

serve as a guinea pig

- to allow some kind of test to be performed on someone

The students served as a guinea pig for the school board's plan to change the school curriculum.

serve notice on (someone)

- to announce something to someone

We served notice on the apartment manager that we would leave our apartment at the end of the month.

serve (someone's) purpose

- to be useful to someone for a certain need

The small screwdriver should serve my purpose until I find the correct size.

serve (someone) right

- to get the punishment or results that one deserves

My friend never studies at all so it serves him right to fail his exam.

serve time

- to spend time in jail

The man served time when he was young but now he is a good citizen.

set Idioms**set a precedent**

- to establish a pattern, to set a policy that must be followed in future cases

The legal case set a precedent that will be followed for many years in the future.

set a trap

- to prepare a trap to catch an animal or a person who is doing something wrong or illegal

The conservation officers set a trap to try and catch the bear.

set about to (do something or go somewhere)

- to begin or start something, to prepare to go somewhere

We set about to prepare for our move to a bigger building.

set back (someone or something) or set (someone or something) back

- to cause someone or something to get behind schedule, to slow down someone or something

The heavy rain set back the efforts of the farmers to plant their crops.

set eyes on (someone or something)

- to see someone or something for the first time

I do not know if my friend is here or not. I have not set eyes on her since yesterday.

set fire to (something)

- to make something burn

The workers set fire to the building by accident.

set foot (somewhere)

- to step or go somewhere

I have never set foot in that restaurant and I never will in the future.

set forth (something)

- to explain something exactly or clearly

The manager carefully set forth the terms of the rental contract.

set forth (somewhere)

- to start to go somewhere, to begin a trip

We set forth on our holiday at 7:00 this morning.

set great store on (someone or something)

- to like or value someone or something

Our company sets great store on their ability to attract good people.

set in

- to begin and probably continue (used for a weather or mental condition)

The rain has set in and it looks like it will not stop.

A mild depression has set in for my neighbor

set in one's ways

- to be inflexible

My grandfather is set in his ways and he will not change his habits.

set one's heart on (something)

- to want something very much

I set my heart on a nice holiday this winter although I have no money.

set one's mind at rest

- to free oneself from worry, to stop worrying

I told my father the reason that we cannot come in order to set his mind at rest.

set one's sights on (something)

- to select something as one's goal

The local politician has set his sights on being elected to a higher office.

set out (somewhere)

- to leave on a journey

Marco Polo set out for China many years ago.

set out to (do something)

- to decide and begin to try to do something, to attempt to do something

My friend set out to learn Spanish when he went to Mexico.

set sail

- to start sailing, to begin a sea voyage

The three women set sail for Hawaii in a small sailboat.

set (someone) back or set back (someone)

- to cost someone

"How much did your new suit set you back?"

set (someone) back on his or her heels

- to surprise/shock/overwhelm someone

The announcement by the principal set the teachers back on their heels.

set (someone or something) free

- to release someone or something

The conservation officers went to the mountains and set the bear free.

set (someone or something) loose

- to set someone or something free, to release someone or something that you are holding

The wildlife department decided to set the bear loose.

set (someone or something) straight

- to explain something to someone

The police officer set the woman straight about the driving laws.

set (someone's) teeth on edge

- to irritate someone

The constant noise from the stereo next door set my teeth on edge.

set (someone) up in business or set up (someone) in business

- to help establish someone in business

My father helped to set my sister's husband up in business.

set (something) aside for (someone or something)

- to save or reserve something for a special purpose

We set some money aside for our next holiday.

set (something) off or set off (something)

- to decorate something through contrast, to balance something by difference

We painted the door red in order to set off the light colors of the walls.

set (something) off or set off (something)

- to cause something to explode

The fire set off a large explosion on the ship.

set (something) right

- to correct something, to make something more fair

The man made an effort to set things right between himself and his brother.

set (something) to music

- to write a piece of music that is related to some written material

The composer has worked hard to set many great stories to music.

set the pace

- to decide on a rate of speed to do something that others will follow

The manager of the factory sets the pace for his employees.

set the stage for (something)

- to prepare for something

The win by our team set the stage for the final championship game next month.

set the table

- to place plates/glasses/napkins on the table before a meal

I set the table while my mother was cooking dinner.

set the world on fire

- to do something outstanding, to do something that makes one famous

The author has not been able to set the world on fire with his writing but he is trying very hard.

set tongues wagging

- to make people start gossiping

The actions of the supervisor set tongues wagging in our office.

set type

- to arrange type for printing

The small printing company worked all night to set type for the local paper.

set up (someone) or set (someone) up

- to put someone in a position to be manipulated or cheated

I do not believe that I lost the money honestly. I believe that someone set me up.

set up (something) or set (something) up

- to establish something, to provide the money for something

The newspaper company provided the money to set up the travel magazine.

The company set up a new department to test new products.

set up (something) or set (something) up

- to make something ready to use by putting the parts together

After we set up the gas barbecue we were able to cook dinner.

set up shop (somewhere)

- to open a business

The fire alarm company decided to set up shop in our city.

set upon (someone or something)

- to attack someone or something violently

The three young boys set upon the man on the city bus.

settle Idioms

settle a score with (someone)

- to retaliate against someone for a past wrong

My boss is trying to settle a score with someone for something that happened several years ago.

settle down

- to calm down

The baby finally settled down and began to sleep.

settle down

- to begin to live a quiet and stable life, to have a regular place to live and a regular job

My friend settled down and started a family after he finished university.

settle for (something)

- to be satisfied with less than you want, to agree to accept something as a second choice

I settled for less than I wanted but I am happy with my new contract at work.

settle on (something)

- to decide on something

We settled on the fish dinner at the restaurant.

settle (one's) affairs

- to deal with one's business matters, to manage one's affairs

It was very difficult for my friend to settle his affairs after his illness.

settle (something) out of court

- to settle a disagreement without having to go through a court of justice

The company was able to settle their lawsuit out of court.

settle up with (someone)

- to pay someone what one owes them

I settled up with my friend before he left to work overseas.

setup

- an arrangement, the details of a situation

My uncle has a very nice setup at his office.

seventh heaven

- a state of intense delight

The singer has been in seventh heaven since she won the music award.

sever ties with (someone)

- to end a relationship or agreement with someone or something

Our company decided to sever ties with the small advertising company.

sew (something) up or sew up (something)

- to complete or secure something

The candidate for the nomination sewed up his victory last week.

shack up with (someone)

- to live with someone without marrying him or her

When my sister was younger she shacked up with her boyfriend for two years.

shades of (someone or something)

- a reminder of someone or something

The festival contained shades of the large festivals of many years ago.

shadow of oneself/itself

- someone or something that is not as strong or healthy as before

The professional boxer was a shadow of his former self.

shake Idioms**shake a leg**

- to go fast, to hurry

"You will have to shake a leg if you want to arrive at the movie on time."

shake (hands) on (something)

- to shake the hand of someone as a sign of agreement about something

I shook hands on the agreement with my boss.

shake hands with (someone)

- to shake the hand of someone to greet them

I shook hands with my neighbor when I first met him.

shake in one's boots

- to be afraid, to shake from fear

The little boy was shaking in his boots when the large dog approached him.

shake off an illness or shake an illness off

- to become well or healthy again

My friend is unable to shake off her illness and cannot come to the party.

shake off (someone or something) or shake (someone or something) off

- to get rid of someone or something that is bothering you

I was able to shake off my cold after a weekend of resting in bed.

shake (someone) down or shake down (someone)

- to get money by threatening someone

The gangsters shook the shop owner down to get some money.

shake up (someone) or shake (someone) up

- to shock or upset someone

The change in policies shook up many people in the company.

shake up (something)

- to reorganize something

The president decided to shake up the company in order to bring new energy into the organization.

shaken up

- to be bothered or disturbed

I was shaken up after I heard about the fire at our apartment building.

shape up

- to improve one's behavior or performance or physical shape

The man has begun to shape up and is doing his job much better.

shape up or ship out

- to either improve one's performance or leave

The new employee was told to shape up or ship out when his performance was not equal to the other members of the staff.

share and share alike

- to have or get equal shares of something

We share and share alike when we are on a camping trip.

share (someone's) pain

- to understand and sympathize with someone's pain or discomfort

I tried hard to share my friend's pain after his father died.

share (someone's) sorrow

- to grieve as someone else grieves

The neighbors shared the man's sorrow after he lost his house in a fire.

shed crocodile tears

- to pretend that one is crying

The man pretended to apologize for his actions but he was only shedding crocodile tears.

shed light on (something)

- to make something clearer or easier to understand

The speech helped to shed light on the political scandal.

shell out money

- to pay money

I shelled out much money for the new stereo.

shine up to (someone)

- to try to please someone, to try to make friends with someone

The man is always shining up to his boss in the hopes of getting an increase in salary.

shipping and handling

- the costs of handling a product and transporting it

The cost of shipping and handling for some goods that are bought over the Internet are very high.

ships that pass in the night

- people who meet briefly by chance but are unlikely to meet again

We were like two ships that pass in the night and I do not think that I will ever see that person again.

shirk one's duty

- to neglect one's job or task

The guard was shirking his duty when he spent much of the evening playing cards.

the shoe is on the other foot

- the opposite is true, the places are changed

The shoe is on the other foot and my neighbor has to deal with the same problems that we must deal with.

a shoo-in

- someone or something that is expected to win, a sure winner

The university president is a shoo-in to win another term in office.

shook up

- to be upset, to be worried

Our secretary was shook up after the accident and has not been back to work since.

shoot Idioms

shoot for (something)

- to attempt to do something, to aim toward a goal

I was shooting for the local spelling championship before I could advance to a higher level.

shoot from the hip

- to speak directly and frankly, to fire a gun that is at one's side

The man often shoots from the hip and gets into trouble over what he says.

shoot one's mouth off

- to boast or talk too much

The boy was shooting his mouth off about his sports ability.

shoot one's wad

- to spend all of one's money, to say everything that is on one's mind

My friend shot his wad at a casino during his vacation.

shoot out (something)

- to stick or throw something outward

The man shot out his foot from under the table and made his friend fall down.

shoot straight

- to act fairly, to deal honestly with others

The salesman always shoots straight when he is dealing with his customers.

shoot the breeze/bull

- to talk idly

I met my friend at the supermarket and we decided to shoot the breeze for a few minutes.

shoot the works

- to spare no expense or effort to do something

They are planning to shoot the works with the victory celebration for the Olympic athletes.

shoot up

- to grow quickly

The boy seemed to shoot up quickly during the summer.

shoot up

- to rise suddenly

The flames shot up over the top of the building.

shoot up (drugs)

- to take drugs by injecting them

We saw someone shooting up heroin in the alley.

shoot up (someone or something)

- to shoot at someone or something recklessly

In many western movies the outlaws come into town and shoot up everything.

shop around for (something)

- to go to various stores to look for something

We shopped around for a month before we bought a new stereo system.

shore (something) up or shore up (something)

- to add support to something which is weak

It was necessary to shore up the house after the mud slide.

short and sweet

- brief and pleasant

My visit with my parents was short and sweet.

the short end (of the stick)

- unfair or unequal treatment

The man always gets the short end of the stick when he is at work.

short for (something)

- something that is a shortened form of a word or phrase

The woman's nickname is short for her full name.

short of (something)

- to not have enough of something

We are short of sugar so I will buy some when I am at the store.

short on (something)

- to be lacking in something

The man is short on patience and is often angry.

short shrift

- rude treatment

The woman received short shrift from her supervisor when she asked for a holiday.

a shot in the arm

- something inspiring or encouraging, a boost of energy

My job search got a shot in the arm when the company president called me for an interview.

a shot in the dark

- an attempt at something without much hope or chance of succeeding

The attempt to find the small boy was a shot in the dark.

shot through with (something)

- containing something

The drink was shot through with some chemicals which I did not know.

shotgun wedding

- a forced wedding

The young couple were forced into a shotgun wedding by the girl's father.

shoulder to shoulder

- side by side, with a shared purpose

The firefighters worked shoulder to shoulder to help prevent the house from burning.

shove off

- to start, to leave

"I think that it is time for us to shove off. It is almost midnight."

shove one's way (somewhere)

- to make a path through a crowd by pushing

We shoved our way into the department store for the big sale.

shove (something) down (someone's) throat

- to force someone to do or agree to something that they do not like or do not want to do

I do not like my supervisor because he is always trying to shove his ideas down my throat.

show Idioms**show-and-tell**

- to present something interesting to a class (in elementary school)

The little boy took a starfish from the ocean to his school for show-and-tell.

show good faith

- to demonstrate good intentions or good will

The man did not show good faith when he asked for extra money after he left his company.

a show of hands

- a display of raised hands in a group to vote on something

The teacher asked for a show of hands to see who wanted to do a presentation.

show off

- to try to attract attention, to display something

My friend likes to show off his new clothes.

show-off

- a person who brags a lot

The girl is a show-off and is always trying to impress other people.

show one's cards/hand

- to disclose one's plans

The buyer will not show us his cards so we do not know what he wants.

show one's (true) colors

- to show what one is really like or is thinking

My friend is showing his true colors when he refuses to help me when I need help.

show signs of (something)

- to show hints or indications of something

The man showed no signs of life after the accident.

show (someone) the door

- to ask someone to go away

When the man started yelling in the restaurant the manager quickly showed him the door.

show (someone) the ropes

- to tell or show someone how to do something

The experienced carpenter made a great effort to show the new trainee the ropes.

show (someone) to his or her seat

- to direct someone to a place to sit

The usher showed the man to his seat.

show (someone) up or show up (someone)

- to do better than another person while others can see you

The girl always shows her friend up by doing all of her schoolwork quickly.

show (something) to good advantage

- to make something look good, to make something stand out

The new paint helped to show the house to good advantage.

show up

- to appear, to arrive, to be present

"What time did your friend show up for the party?"

show up

- to become easy to see

After we cleaned the vase the design began to show up.

shrug (something) off or shrug off (something)

- to not be bothered or hurt by something, to disregard something

The girl says mean things but we always shrug off her comments.

shut Idioms

shut off

- to be apart, to be separated from someone or something

The small town is shut off from the other small towns in the valley.

shut out (a team)

- to prevent the opposition team from scoring during a game

Our national soccer team shut out the other team last night.

shut (something) off or shut off (something)

- to make something like water or electricity stop

We always shut off the gas when we leave the house.

shut (something) up or shut up (something)

- to close the doors and windows of a building for a period of time

We decided to shut up our cottage for the winter.

shut the door on (someone)

- to close the door to keep someone out

The teacher always shuts the door on students who come late for her class.

shut the door on (something)

- to terminate/exclude/obstruct something

The bad behavior of the employees shut the door on any future parties at the company.

shut up

- to stop talking

"Please shut up and let someone else speak."

shut up (someone or something) or shut (someone or something) up

- to confine someone or something

We always shut up our dog in the house when the postal worker comes.

shuttle from place to place

- to move from place to place

The athletes shuffled from place to place during the sports event.

The volunteer drivers shuffled the athletes from place to place during the sports event.

shy away from (someone or something)

- to avoid someone or something

Recently my doctor has shied away from giving me advice about my eating habits.

sick and tired of (someone or something)

- to dislike someone or something, to be annoyed with someone or something

I am sick and tired of my friend's complaining.

sick in bed

- to remain in bed while you are sick

My father was sick in bed for three days last week.

sick of (someone or something)

- to be bored with someone or something, to dislike someone or something

I think that the clerk is sick of working late every day.

side against (someone)

- to choose sides against someone

My friend always sides against me when I am involved in an argument with someone.

side with (someone)

- to favor or support someone's position in a dispute

The mother always sides with her daughter when the daughter has an argument.

a sight for sore eyes

- a welcome sight

The man was a sight for sore eyes when he returned to work after a long holiday.

sight unseen

- before seeing a thing or a person

My friend bought the car sight unseen and now he is having trouble with it.

sign on the dotted line

- to place one's signature on a contract or other important paper

The sales manager gave me the contract and asked me to sign on the dotted line.

sign on with (someone)

- to sign an agreement to work with or for someone

My cousin has signed on with one of the largest companies in the world.

sign one's own death warrant

- to do something knowingly that will probably result in severe trouble

Our secretary signed her own death warrant when she came to work late three times last week.

sign (something) over

- to give something legally to someone by signing one's name

The man signed over his car to his son on his 21st birthday.

sign up for (something)

- to promise to do something by signing one's name, to join something

My friend recently decided to sign up for tennis lessons.

signal to (someone) to do (something)

- to give someone an instruction by using a signal

I signaled to our coach to take me out of the game.

signed, sealed and delivered

- formally and officially signed

The contract to buy the house was signed, sealed and delivered when I delivered it to the real estate agent.

the silence is deafening

- the silence is so great that one becomes uncomfortable, the silence is so great that it suggests the disapproval of something

The silence was deafening at the meeting when nobody stood up to challenge the speaker for his extreme remarks.

silly season

- the time of the year (late summer) when there is no important news and news reporters focus on unimportant things

It was the end of summer and it was now the silly season for the news media.

simmer down

- to become calm or quiet

He was very angry after the meeting but now he has begun to simmer down.

since time immemorial

- since a very long time ago

Since time immemorial people have been coming to the hot springs to bathe in the water.

sing (someone's) praises

- to praise someone highly and enthusiastically

My supervisor always sings my praises when he introduces me to someone.

sing a different tune

- to contradict one's previous ideas, to change one's attitude

Usually the man does not care if he disturbs his neighbors at midnight but now that he must get up early in the morning he is singing a different tune.

sink in

- to penetrate, to become understood

It will take time for the comments of our boss to sink in.

sink into despair

- to grieve or to become depressed

The woman sank into despair when she learned that she had lost her job.

sink one's teeth into (something)

- to begin to work seriously on a project or problem

The problem is difficult and is very hard to sink your teeth into.

sink or swim

- to fail or succeed by one's own efforts

My cousin will have to sink or swim when he begins his new job.

sit Idioms**sit around (somewhere)**

- to sit somewhere and relax and do nothing

I spent the morning sitting around my apartment.

sit back

- to be located a distance away from a street

The large mansion sits back three hundred meters from the street.

sit back

- to relax or rest, to take a break

We decided to sit back for the day and not do anything.

sit back and let (something) happen

- to relax and not interfere in something

I did not want to sit back and let things happen so I began to make some phone calls about my situation.

sit bolt upright

- to sit up straight

I sat bolt upright when I heard the news about my cousin.

sit idly by

- to sit and watch something while others work, to ignore a situation that calls for help

The man sat idly by while the others worked hard.

a sit-in

- a political demonstration where students or workers refuse to leave their classroom or job site

The students had a sit-in to demand lower tuition fees.

sit in for (someone)

- to take someone else's place in some activity

I asked my friend to sit in for me at my volunteer job at the community center.

sit in on (something)

- to attend or participate in a meeting or similar gathering

Our boss sat in on our meeting so that he could learn what was happening.

sit on (something)

- to be a member of a jury or board

The former politician sits on the board of many corporations.

sit on its hands

- an audience refuses to applaud

The audience sat on its hands after the terrible performance by the singer.

sit on one's hands

- to do nothing, to fail to help

The manager sat on her hands and refused to do anything about the complaints that she had received.

sit on (something)

- to hold someone or something back, to delay something

I am going to sit on my job application until I am sure that I want to apply for the new job.

sit on the fence

- to not support any side in a dispute, to not decide something, to not support something

Most of the politicians are sitting on the fence about the new subway proposal.

sit right

- to be unacceptable (usually used in the negative or as a question)

The idea seemed good at first but now it does not sit right with the other members of the staff.

sit (something) out or sit out (something)

- to not participate in something, to wait until something is over

I am planning to sit the meeting out as I am very tired today.

sit through (something)

- to witness or endure all of something

I had to sit through a very boring lecture yesterday.

sit tight

- to wait patiently for something

"Please sit tight for a few minutes while I go and get a police officer."

sit up and take notice

- to become alert and pay attention

The loud bang made everybody sit up and take notice.

sit up with (someone)

- to stay with someone (a sick person) during the night

My mother had to sit up all night because my younger sister was very sick.

sit well with (someone)

- to please someone

My decision to leave early for the weekend did not sit well with the other members of the staff.

a sitting duck

- a non-moving target that is easily hit by a hunter

The hunter shot the sitting duck easily.

a sitting duck

- an unsuspecting person who is easily fooled - as if he or she were waiting to be attacked

The woman was a sitting duck for the thief when she sat on the bench next to her purse.

sitting on top of the world

- feeling very good or happy

I was sitting on top of the world after I heard from my friend.

sitting pretty

- to be in a favorable situation

My uncle is sitting pretty with his new job and high salary.

a sitting target

- someone who is in a position that can be easily attacked

The manager was a sitting target for criticism by the staff.

six feet under

- to be dead

My friend does not plan to move from his house until he is six feet under.

six of one or half-a-dozen of the other

- to be the same, to have no difference between two things

It was six of one or half-a-dozen of the other if we should take the train or the airplane. They both arrived at the same time and cost the same.

at sixes and sevens

- to be in confusion or disagreement

Everybody has been at sixes and sevens since they opened the new school.

sixth sense

- a power to know or feel things other than by sight/hearing/smell/taste/touch

My friend seems to have a sixth sense and he knows many things that nobody else knows.

the size of it

- the way something is

"That's about the size of it," I said as I told my friend about the accident.

size up (someone or something)

- to try to form an opinion of someone, to assess a situation

It took me some time to size up the candidate before deciding to offer him a job.

skate on thin ice

- to risk danger or disapproval about something

My friend is skating on thin ice and he may be fired from his job.

skeleton in one's closet

- a family secret that one does not like to talk about

The politician has a skeleton in his closet that he does not want to talk about.

skid row

- a poor area of a city where many people have no money or job or good housing

The skid row area of our city is a place where few tourists want to go.

skin and bones

- very skinny

The cat which we found in the empty house was skin and bones.

skin-deep

- only on the surface, having no deep or honest meaning

Although beauty may be only skin-deep many people care about it very much.

by the skin of one's teeth

- barely

We arrived on time for the train by the skin of our teeth.

no skin off one's nose

- of no concern or trouble or interest to someone

It is no skin off my nose whether or not she comes to the party.

skin (someone) alive

- to scold someone angrily, to spank or beat someone

The woman told her son that if he was late for dinner she would skin him alive.

skip bail

- to run away and not come to trial and therefore give up the money (bail) that you have paid the court to guarantee that you appear

The man skipped bail and went to another city before he was arrested again.

skip it

- to forget about something

"Skip it," I said when my friend forgot to bring me the phone number many times.

skip out on (someone or something)

- to sneak away from someone or some event

I decided to skip out on the meeting and go to a movie.

skip rope

- to jump over a rope that is held by two people and which goes over your head and under your feet

The children spent the morning skipping rope.

skirt the issue

- to avoid the topic

My boss likes to skirt the issue if I try to discuss my salary.

sky is the limit

- there is no limit to the success that can be achieved or the money that can be spent or made

The sky is the limit for my friend and his new job.

slack off

- to reduce something gradually, to become less active, to become lazy

Recently, I have begun to slack off in my effort to find a new job.

slam dunk

- a sure thing, a dramatic forceful dunk shot in basketball

It is a slam dunk that I will pass my examination.

a slap in the face

- an insult

Not getting a promotion was a slap in the face for the sales manager.

slap (someone or something) down or slap down (someone or something)

- to rebuke or reject someone or something

My boss slapped my proposal down soon after the meeting started.

slap (something) together or slap together (something)

- to make something in a hurry and without care

We slapped together a picnic table for the company picnic.

slash prices

- to reduce prices significantly

The store is slashing prices on the new computers.

slated for (something)

- to be scheduled for something

The building is slated for demolition at the end of the year.

a slave to (someone or something)

- someone who is under the control of someone or something

My mother is a slave to her desire to watch soap operas on television.

not sleep a wink

- to not get any sleep (used in the negative)

I did not sleep a wink last night.

sleep in

- to oversleep, to sleep late in the morning

I was very tired so I decided to sleep in this morning.

sleep like a baby

- to sleep very soundly

I slept like a baby last night.

sleep like a log

- to sleep very soundly

I slept like a log last night.

sleep on (something)

- to think about something, to consider something, to decide something later

"I will sleep on the proposal tonight and I will give you an answer tomorrow."

sleep (something) off or sleep off (something)

- to sleep while the effects of liquor or drugs go away

We spent the evening in a nightclub and I had to spend much of the next day sleeping it off.

sleep with (someone)

- to share a bed with someone

The little girl always sleeps with her mother when they go on a holiday.

slice of the cake

- a share of something

The city tax office wants a slice of the cake in our new business.

slip away

- to go away or escape quietly or secretly

I slipped away after my class to get something to eat.

a slip of the tongue

- something that is said at the wrong time and is not what you want to say

The clerk's comment to the customer was a slip of the tongue.

slip off

- to go away or escape quietly or secretly

I slipped off after the lecture and went home.

slip one's mind

- to be forgotten

"I am very sorry that I did not meet you last night but our appointment slipped my mind."

slip out

- to go away, to leave quietly or secretly

I slipped out for a few minutes to buy some milk.

slip out

- to allow a piece of (secret) information to be revealed

It slipped out that the government is planning to close the large downtown hospital.

slip through (someone's) fingers

- to get away from someone

My friend had a very good opportunity but it slipped through his fingers because of his lack of action.

slip up

- to make a mistake

I slipped up when I said that I would not go to the meeting next week.

slow as molasses in January

- very slow

The little girl is as slow as molasses in January and she never gets her work done on time.

slow down

- to go more slowly than usual, to cause something to reduce speed

You should slow down when you are driving on a wet road.

a slow-down

- a type of work action where you do not come to a complete stop like you do during a work strike

The workers had a slow-down at the post office last year.

slow going

- the slow rate of speed and the difficulty to do something

It was slow going as I studied for my mathematics test.

slow on the draw

- to be slow in drawing a gun or in doing something

The man is slow on the draw and never takes advantage of opportunities.

slow on the uptake

- to be slow to figure something out

The new employee is slow on the uptake and we must explain everything to him at least two times.

slow up

- to become slow or slower

The traffic slowed up because the bridge was closed.

slower and slower

- to become slow and then become even slower

The speed of the train was becoming slower and slower as it reached the city.

slowly but surely

- slowly and deliberately

Slowly but surely we are preparing for our holiday next month.

sly as a fox

- to be smart and clever

The storeowner is as sly as a fox and you can never make a good deal with him.

smack dab in the middle

- right in the middle

There was a small hole smack dab in the middle of the plastic swimming pool.

smack into (someone or something)

- to collide or hit someone or something

The car smacked into the car in front of it.

small fry

- someone or something of little importance, young children

The police are trying to catch the major criminals in the gang. They are not interested in the small fry.

small hours (of the night/morning)

- the hours immediately after midnight

My father likes to read the newspaper in the small hours of the night.

small print

- the part of a document that you cannot easily notice because of the small size of the print but which often contains very important information

I always read the small print before I sign a sales contract.

small talk

- informal conversation

There was much small talk at the party before the guests could eat.

small-time

- small, on a small scale

The man is a small-time criminal and is often involved in some kind of trouble.

smarty pants

- a person who is annoying because they always have an answer or seem to know everything

The boy is a smarty pants and he acts like he knows everything.

smash hit

- a very successful performance/song/play/movie

Avatar was a smash hit.

smear campaign (against someone)

- a campaign (of rumors) aimed at damaging someone's reputation

There was a smear campaign against the mayor of the city.

smell a rat

- to become suspicious

I do not know what my colleague is doing but something seems strange. I think that I smell a rat.

smile on (someone or something)

- to be favorable to someone or something

The weather is smiling on the farmers in our area.

smoke and mirrors

- deception and confusion

The accounting department used a system of smoke and mirrors to hide their illegal activities.

smoke (someone or something) out or smoke out (someone or something)

- to force someone or something out with smoke

We smoked the rats out of their nests with the smoke.

smoke (something) out or smoke out (something)

- to find out the facts about something

We finally were able to smoke out the reason why our boss left the company.

smooth (something) over or smooth over (something)

- to make something better or more pleasant

We tried to smooth over the problems between our supervisor and the sales staff.

smooth sailing

- something is going well and is having no problems

After we left the city it was smooth sailing on the highway until we got to our destination.

snail's pace

- a very slow movement forward

The cars on the highway were moving at a snail's pace.

snake in the grass

- an enemy who pretends to be a friend

"You should be careful of that woman. Although she seems very nice she is like a snake in the grass."

a snap

- an easy task

The exam was a snap and I am sure that I did very well.

snap at (someone)

- to speak sharply or angrily to someone

Our supervisor often snaps at the people who he works with.

snap decision

- a decision that is taken quickly and often in response to an urgent situation

The woman made a snap decision to go home and visit her sick mother.

snap out of (something)

- to return to a normal state

The man finally snapped out of his depression and was able to return to work.

snap (something) up or snap up (something)

- to take/buy/accept something eagerly

The concert tickets were snapped up in three hours.

(not to be) sneezed at

- to be worth having, (not) to be considered unimportant (used in the negative)

The new computer system is not to be sneezed at.

"Do you think that the new offer is something to sneeze at?"

sniff out (someone or something) or sniff (someone or something) out

- to locate someone or something

The police dog worked hard to sniff out the bank robber.

a snow job

- insincere or exaggerated talk designed to gain the favor of someone

His presentation at the meeting was a snow job.

a snow job

- technical vocabulary that makes you seem like an expert in a field

The salesman tried to give us a snow job when he talked about the new machine.

snow (someone) under

- to give so much work or something that it cannot be dealt with

The extra homework snowed me under during the last week.

(not a) snowball's chance in hell

- no chance at all (used in the negative or interrogative or conditional)

We do not have a snowball's chance in hell of winning the game tomorrow.

"Do you really think that you have a snowball's chance in hell to win the championship?"

If I thought that I had a snowball's chance in hell to get the job I would apply for it.

so Idioms

a so-and-so

- a person that you do not like

I do not like that so-and-so. His personality really bothers me.

so far

- until now

So far no one has entered the speech contest at the television station.

so far, so good

- until now things have gone well

"So far, so good," she replied when we asked her how her new job was going.

so help me

- I promise, I swear

"So help me, if you do not pay me back my money I will phone your company."

so long

- goodbye

"So long, I will see you next week."

so mad that one could scream

- very mad

I was so mad that I could scream when the travel agent made a mistake with my airline ticket.

so much

- a large quantity of something

There was so much rain in the spring that our garden did not grow well.

so much for (someone or something)

- that is the last that you will see of someone or something

So much for going on a holiday this summer. I do not have any money.

so much the better

- all to the better

"So much the better, if extra people help us then we can get the work done quickly."

so quiet you can hear a pin drop

- very quiet

It was so quiet you could hear a pin drop when the woman stood up to speak about her cancer operation.

so-so

- not good and not bad

I was feeling so-so and decided not to go to a movie tonight.

so soon

- early, before the regular time

I did not expect the dinner to end so soon. It was still very early.

so still you can hear a pin drop

- very quiet

The room was so still you could hear a pin drop.

so to speak

- as one might or could say, this is one way to say something

We had a good time at the restaurant, so to speak, although the service was not very good.

soak (something) up or soak up (something)

- to take something into oneself like a sponge absorbs water

My friend was able to soak up much knowledge when he went to the film seminar.

soaked to the skin

- one's clothing is wet right through to the skin

We were soaked to the skin when we got home from the picnic.

sob story

- a story that makes one feel pity or sorrow

My sister told me a sob story about how she had lost her job.

sock it to (someone)

- to do everything that one is capable of doing

The president socked it to the audience during his speech at the convention.

sock (something) away or sock away (something)

- to store something in a safe place, to save something

I have been socking money away for my holidays.

soft spot for (someone or something)

- a feeling of affection toward a person or thing

My mother has a soft spot for the elderly lady in her apartment building.

soften up (someone) or soften (someone) up

- to weaken one's opposition

The boxer tried hard to soften up his opponent.

soil one's diapers

- a baby fills his or her diapers

The baby soiled his diapers on the airplane trip.

sold out

- a product or ticket is completely sold from a store or event

All of the latest DVD's are sold out at the moment.

solid as a rock

- very solid or dependable

The small bank in our city is as solid as a rock and is a very stable organization.

somebody up there loves/hates me

- an unseen power in heaven has been favorable/unfavorable to you

"Somebody up there loves me," the man said when he found the money on the side of the road.

something about (someone or something)

- something strange/special/curious about someone or something

There is something about the woman that is very strange.

something else

- to be so good as to be beyond description, to be something entirely different

The movie was something else. It was the best movie that I have seen in many years.

something else again

- to be something that is very different

Working all day on Saturday is okay but working all day on Sunday is something else again.

something of the sort

- something of the kind just mentioned

I do not know exactly what the man said but it was about his job or something of the sort.

something or other

- one thing or another

My friend said something or other about his car but I am not sure exactly what he said.

something to that effect

- something similar to what was just said

The apartment manager said that we could not bring a bicycle into the apartment lobby or something to that effect.

something's up

- something is happening

I do not know what the children are doing but I think that something's up.

somewhere in the neighborhood of (an amount of money or something)

- approximately a particular measurement or amount

There were somewhere in the neighborhood of fifty people at the meeting.

son of a bitch

- a horrible person, a difficult task

I wish that that son of a bitch would stop using my camera without asking me.

son of a gun

- something difficult and unpleasant

"This is a son of a gun. I cannot fix it at all."

son of a sea biscuit

- an expression that is used as a polite replacement for son of a bitch

"Son of a sea biscuit," the man said when he hit his hand with a hammer.

a song and dance

- an excuse

My friend gave me a song and dance about being busy but I did not believe him.

sooner or later

- eventually

"Sooner or later you must give me my money so you should do it now."

sore loser

- a person who gets angry when he or she loses

The man is a sore loser when he does not win a game of tennis.

sort of (something)

- to be almost something, to be similar to something, to be not quite something

"Did you finish cleaning the kitchen?"

"I sort of finished, but not really."

sort out (something) or sort (something) out

- to clear up some confusion, to straighten out something

Our accountant is working hard to sort out the money problems.

sound as if

- to seem as if something were so from what has been said

It sounds as if my friend is planning to look for a new job.

sound like a broken record

- to say the same thing over and over again

The boy's mother sounds like a broken record when she tells him to clean his room.

sound like (something)

- to seem like something

It sounds like the stores are going to close early on Saturday because of the holiday.

sound off about (something)

- to tell what one knows or thinks in a loud voice

My friend often sounds off about why he does not like his job.

sound (someone) out or sound out (someone)

- to try to find out how a person feels about something by asking him or her questions

The man has been sounding out his wife to see if she wants to move to a new house.

soup (something) up or soup up (something)

- to change and add something to make something more powerful or faster (usually a car)

My friend souped his car up when he was a teenager.

sow one's wild oats

- to do wild and foolish things in one's youth

The man sowed his wild oats when he was a young man.

spaced out

- to be confused or incoherent, to resemble someone who is using drugs, to be daydreaming

The boy was totally spaced out when the teacher asked him a question about his homework.

spare (someone) from (something)

- to exempt someone from having to listen to or express something

I wish that our teacher would spare us from her speeches about her difficult childhood.

Speak Idioms

speak for itself/themselves

- to not need explaining

The actions of the men speak for themselves and there is no point talking about it.

speak for (something)

- to make a request for something, to ask for something

I spoke for the comfortable chair as soon as I entered the room.

speak highly of (someone or something)

- to say good things about someone or something

Everybody speaks highly of the new principal of our school.

speak ill of (someone)

- to say something bad about someone

I wish that my friend would not speak ill of the other people in our class.

speak of the devil (and he appears)

- to appear just when someone is talking about you

"Speak of the devil and he appears," I said as our colleague who we were talking about walked in the door.

speak off the cuff

- to speak in public without preparation

My father plans to speak off the cuff at his retirement party tonight.

speak one's mind

- to say openly what one thinks

I think that it is time for me to speak my mind and talk about my complaints about our company.

speak one's piece

- to say openly what one thinks

The man spoke his piece and then sat down.

speak out about (something)

- to speak in favor of or in support of something, to talk freely and without fear about something

My boss spoke out about the lack of computers.

speak out of turn

- to say something unwise, to say something at the wrong time

The young man spoke out of turn while the teacher was asking him questions.

speak the same language (as someone)

- to have similar ideas or tastes or opinions as someone else

I think that I speak the same language as the new supervisor in our company.

speak up

- to speak in a loud or clear voice, to speak without fear or hesitation

I asked our teacher to speak up because I could not hear him.

speak up for (someone or something)

- to speak in favor of someone or something

The politician is always willing to speak up for the poorest people in the city.

speak with a forked tongue

- to tell lies

The man speaks with a forked tongue and nobody trusts him.

spell (something) out or spell out (something)

- to explain something in very simple words, to explain something very clearly

I spelled out the conditions for renting the house very clearly.

spell trouble

- to signify future trouble, to mean trouble

The problems that we are having with our furnace spell trouble for the coming cold season.

spick-and-span or spic-and-span

- very clean, very neat

The house was spick-and-span when we returned from our holiday.

spill the beans

- to tell a secret

My friend promised not to spill the beans about my plans to get married.

spin a yarn

- to tell a tale or story

I like my new neighbor because he always likes to spin a yarn.

spin one's wheels

- to be in motion but to make no progress

I was spinning my wheels all week but I did not get much done.

spin (something) off or spin off (something)

- to create something as a by-product of something else

The company plans to spin off some new products from their original invention.

spirit of the law

- something as it is meant to be and not as it is stated exactly, what the people who made the law wanted to achieve

The judge tried to follow the spirit of the law and not only as it was written.

spit up (something) or spit (something) up

- to throw something up, to vomit something

The dog spit up the button that he had swallowed.

spitting image of (someone)

- the exact resemblance to someone

My cousin is the spitting image of his father.

split hairs

- to disagree or argue about something that is not important, to make unnecessary distinctions about something

The manager makes many good points but he has a tendency to split hairs and waste our time.

split one's sides (with laughter)

- to laugh so hard that one's sides almost split

I split my sides with laughter when the woman began to tell jokes.

split (some people) up or split up (some people)

- to separate two or more people from one another

The teacher had to split the two boys up because they were fighting.

split (something) fifty-fifty

- to divide something into two equal parts

I decided to split the prize fifty-fifty with my friend.

split the difference

- to settle a money disagreement by dividing the difference into two amounts

We had to pay extra money for the rental car so we decided to split the difference and each pay half.

a split ticket

- a voting ticket with candidates from more than one political party

My friend usually votes for a split ticket when he votes and never votes for only one political party.

split up

- to separate

They seemed like a nice couple but they suddenly split up last month.

splurge on (something)

- to spend a lot of money on something

The boy splurged on a beautiful present for his girlfriend.

spoken for

- to be taken or reserved

All of the tickets to the concert are spoken for.

spook (someone)

- to startle or surprise someone

The loud thunder and lightning spooked the horse.

spoon-feed (someone)

- to make something very easy for someone

He is a very strict teacher and never likes to spoon-feed his students.

sporting chance

- a reasonably good chance

The man does not have a sporting chance of winning the competition.

spotlight (someone or something)

- to put special focus or attention on a person or a thing

The computer problem helped to spotlight our need to buy a new computer.

spout off about (someone or something)

- to talk too much about someone or something

The woman is always spouting off about her problems.

spread like wildfire

- to spread rapidly and without control

The panic over the bad drinking water spread like wildfire through the city.

spread oneself too thin

- to try to do too many things at one time

My sister has been spreading herself too thin lately and is not accomplishing very much of anything.

no spring chicken

- a young person (used with a negative)

My aunt is no spring chicken. She is almost 96-years old.

spring for (something)

- to buy something, to pay for something

I will spring for a new camera before I go on my vacation.

spring (something) on (someone)

- to surprise someone with something

I wish that my friend would not suddenly spring his crazy ideas on me.

spring up

- to suddenly come to exist

Many new restaurants are beginning to spring up in the downtown area.

spruce (someone or something) up or spruce up (someone or something)

- to improve the appearance of someone or something, to tidy up or renew someone or something

We spruced up the community center for the holidays.

(on the) spur of the moment

- suddenly

We decided to go to Hong Kong on the spur of the moment.

square Idioms

square accounts with (someone)

- to settle one's financial accounts with someone, to get even with someone

I went to the store to square accounts with the manager.

square away (something) or square (something) away

- to put something away, to put something in order, to take care of something

"Have you squared away your plans for your holidays yet?"

a square deal

- a fair and honest transaction

I always receive a square deal when I do business with the local shops in my area.

a square meal

- a nourishing or filling meal

We ate our first square meal in many days when we visited my grandparents.

square off

- to get ready for an argument or fight

The two candidates squared off to debate the important issues of the election.

square one

- the beginning

We had to go back to square one and start the project over.

a square peg in a round hole

- a person who does not fit into a job or position

My friend was like a square peg in a round hole when he tried to do the job of an accountant.

square things up with (someone)

- to pay someone what one owes him or her

I squared things up with my friend and gave him the money that I owed him.

square up to (someone or something)

- to face someone or something bravely

The young man was forced to square up to the mistake that he had made.

squawk about (something)

- to complain about something

People are always squawking about the bad service in the new restaurant.

squeak by (someone or something)

- to just barely exceed or pass someone or something

I was able to squeak by the deadline and submit my scholarship application on time.

squirrel (something) away or squirrel away (something)

- to hide or store something

We tried to squirrel away some money for our holiday.

stab (someone) in the back

- to betray someone

I dislike that man because he tried to stab me in the back.

stack the cards/deck for or against (someone or something)

- to arrange things unfairly for or against someone or something

The company is stacking the cards against some small sellers because of their strict standards.

stack up (something) or stack (something) up

- to make a stack of things

I stacked up the magazines to give to the flea market.

stake a claim to (something)

- to make a claim for something

Everybody in our class tried to stake a claim to the free cell phones.

stall off (someone or something) or stall (someone or something) off

- to put off or delay someone or something

I believe that I will be able to stall off the meeting for several hours.

stamp out (something) or stamp (something) out

- to destroy something completely, to make something disappear

The government is trying to stamp out smoking among teenagers.

one's stamping grounds

- a place where a person spends much of his or her time

My cousin went back to his old stamping grounds which he remembered as a teenager.

stand Idioms

(cannot) stand (someone or something)

- to be unable to tolerate someone or something, to dislike someone or something (usually used in the negative)

My friend cannot stand the other people in her class.

stand a chance of (doing something)

- to have a possibility of doing something

Our team stands a chance of winning the championship this year.

stand adjourned

- to be dismissed or to end (used for a meeting)

"This meeting now stands adjourned."

stand behind (someone or something)

- to endorse or support someone or something

The company will always stand behind their products.

stand by

- to be near, to be waiting to do something when you are needed
There is a doctor standing by in case there is a medical emergency.

stand by (someone)

- to follow or keep one's promise to someone, to be loyal to or support someone
The woman always stands by her husband when he has a problem.

stand clear of (something)

- to keep away from something

"Please stand clear of the door while we are moving the piano."

stand corrected

- to admit that one has been wrong

I was forced to stand corrected when I made a mistake about the time of the train.

stand for (something)

- to signify or mean something

I do not know what the letters stand for so I cannot write the full name of the company.

stand for (something)

- to speak in favor of something, to show that one supports something

All of the candidates stand for a platform of law and order.

(not) stand for (something)

- to not allow something to happen, to not permit something, to not tolerate something

Our teacher will not stand for students coming to his class late.

stand in awe of (someone or something)

- to look upon someone or something with wonder, to feel respect for someone or something

Everybody stands in awe of the football coach.

stand in for (someone)

- to be a substitute for someone

The new actor stood in for the famous actor who was sick.

stand in (someone's) way

- to be a barrier to someone's desires or intentions

The woman did not want anyone to stand in her way of getting a promotion.

stand off from (someone or something)

- to stay at a distance from someone or something, to stay apart from someone or something

The girl always stands off from the other students in her class.

stand off (someone or something)

- to keep someone or something from winning

We were able to stand off the other team and win the tournament.

stand on ceremony

- to be formal

"You do not need to stand on ceremony. You can relax."

stand on one's own two feet

- to be independent

My friend learned to stand on his own two feet when he was very young.

stand one's ground

- to maintain and defend one's position

Our supervisor stood his ground over his decision to fire the employee.

stand out

- to be more noticeable than those around you

The man likes to wear clothes that let him stand out from the crowd.

stand over (someone or something)

- to watch someone or something closely, to keep checking someone or something all the time

The father stood over his son to make sure that he was studying for his final exams.

stand pat

- to not change, to be satisfied with things

We should stand pat and not do anything to cause problems with the negotiations.

stand (someone) in good stead with (someone or something)

- to be an advantage to someone

Working hard will stand you in good stead with your company.

stand still for (something)

- to tolerate or endure something, to not move for something

The little boy refused to stand still for his medical examination.

stand to reason

- to make sense, to be logical

It stands to reason that the new employee will work hard if his effort is rewarded.

stand up

- to be strong enough to use for a long time

The new carpet should stand up for a long time.

stand up (someone) or stand (someone) up

- to fail to keep an appointment or date with someone (usually used for a date with a boyfriend or girlfriend)

The boy stood up the girl last Saturday and now she will not talk to him.

stand up and be counted

- to be willing to say what one thinks in public

The union members wanted to stand up and be counted before management took away their benefits.

stand up for (someone or something)

- to defend against attack, to fight for someone or something

The citizens of the town were ready to stand up for their rights.

stand up to (someone)

- to be brave in confronting someone

The man stood up to his boss during the meeting.

a standing joke

- something that regularly and over time causes amusement when it is mentioned

It was a standing joke around our office that our boss was a very bad golfer.

stark raving mad

- to be completely crazy

The woman who lives next door is stark raving mad.

stars in one's eyes

- to have an appearance or feeling of very great happiness

The woman had stars in her eyes when she saw the beautiful ring that her boyfriend gave her.

start from scratch

- to start from the beginning

I lost all of my notes so I had to start from scratch with the project.

start from square one

- to start from the very beginning

We will have to start from square one with our plans for the new project.

start in as (something)

- to begin a career as something

The man started in as a mailroom clerk but soon he had more important jobs in the company.

start off on the wrong foot

- to start something badly, to start a relationship badly

I started off on the wrong foot with my supervisor.

start off with a clean slate

- to begin something fresh

I started off with a clean slate when I began the new project in our company.

start out as (something)

- to start one's career as something

The president of our company started out as a mailroom clerk when he was young.

start over with a clean slate

- to ignore the past and start over again

The young man broke the law several times but he was able to start over with a clean slate when the judge decided that he would probably not do anything bad in the future.

start the ball rolling

- to begin to do something

My uncle started the ball rolling on his plans to build a new house.

start up (something) or start (something) up

- to begin operating something, to begin to play or do something

My uncle started up a small business when he was 20-years old.

stay away from (someone or something)

- to avoid someone or something, to stay at a distance from someone or something

My uncle is staying away from salty foods these days.

stay in

- to remain at home, to not go out

We plan to stay in this evening.

stay in touch with (someone)

- to talk or write to someone, to maintain contact with someone

I want to stay in touch with my friends from high school.

stay put

- to stay in one place, to not leave

We decided to stay put for our holidays rather than go away.

stay up

- to not go to bed, to remain awake

My friend likes to stay up late every night.

steal a base

- to sneak from one base to another in baseball

The player was easily able to steal a base during the baseball game.

steal a march on (someone)

- to get an advantage over someone without being noticed

I was able to steal a march on my colleague when he was away on vacation.

steal (someone's) thunder

- to do or say something that another person had planned to do or say

My colleague stole my thunder when he announced that he was leaving the company before I will.

steal the show

- to do so well in a performance that you get most of the attention

The young musician stole the show at the music festival.

steal the spotlight

- to do so well in a performance that you get most of the attention

The singer always steals the spotlight when she sings.

steamed up

- to be angry

I was steamed up over the fact that my friend lost the keys to my apartment.

steaming mad

- to be very angry

The woman was steaming mad when the customer service representative was rude to her on the telephone.

steer clear of (someone or something)

- to avoid someone or something

I have been steering clear of my friend since our fight.

stem from

- to originate from, to be caused by

The accident stems from the bad condition of the machine.

step Idioms

step-by-step

- gradually

My grandfather is learning how to use a computer step-by-step.

step down from (a job/position)

- to leave an important job or position

My father recently stepped down from his job as president of his company.

step in

- to become involved or concerned with something, to enter a place for a brief time

The teacher had to step in and stop the fight between the two children.

step into (someone's) shoes

- to take over a job or other role from someone

I will have to step into my supervisor's shoes while he is away on vacation.

step into the breach

- to move into a space or vacancy

The woman stepped into the breach and helped the other teachers while several people were sick.

step on it

- to go faster, to hurry

"Please step on it," the man yelled as the taxi took him to the airport.

step on (someone's) toes

- to do something that embarrasses or offends someone else

The supervisor stepped on many people's toes at work and now he has many enemies.

step on the gas

- to go faster, to hurry

I had to step on the gas in order to get to work on time.

step out

- to leave home or work for a short time

I stepped out of the office to buy a newspaper.

step out of line

- to misbehave, to do something offensive or wrong

When the children step out of line their teacher becomes very angry.

step right up

- to move forward toward someone or something

The clerk told me to step right up when I was waiting to order some food.

step up (something)

- to make something go faster, to increase something

Recently, we stepped up our effort to hire some new computer programmers for our company.

step up (to something)

- to rise to a higher or more important position, to be promoted

My boss stepped up to the position of manager after the old manager was fired.

step up to the plate

- to accept a challenge, to prepare to do a task, to move near home plate in baseball in order to prepare to hit the ball when it is thrown/pitched

My friend stepped up to the plate and helped us complete the project.

The batter stepped up to the plate and waited for the pitch.

stew in one's own juice

- to suffer from something that one has caused to happen to himself or herself

The man is stewing in his own juice after he got into trouble for being late.

stick Idioms

stick around

- to stay or wait nearby for something

We decided to stick around after the game and talk.

stick by/with (someone or something)

- to support someone or something

The woman always sticks by her friends when they are in trouble.

I stuck with my friend during his troubles.

a stick-in-the-mud

- a person who is old-fashioned or does not want to join with others and do something

The girl is a stick-in-the-mud and will never join in any of the activities at a party.

stick it to (someone)

- to cheat someone, to take unfair advantage of someone

The car salesman tried to stick it to the customer.

stick one's neck out for (someone or something)

- to take risks, to support someone

The man never sticks his neck out for anyone at work and he has few friends.

stick out like a sore thumb

- to be obvious and visible

The woman sticks out like a sore thumb when she wears her red hat.

stick (someone) with (something)

- to leave someone with an unpleasant task

My friend always sticks me with paying the bill when we go to a restaurant.

stick (something) out or stick out (something)

- to endure or continue something

My friend does not like her new job but she plans to stick it out until she saves some money.

stick (something) up or stick up (something)

- to attach something to a wall or post

I plan to stick the poster up on our kitchen wall.

stick to a story

- to remain faithful to the facts of a story

The two boys stuck to their story about how they found the money.

stick to one's guns

- to defend an action or opinion despite an unfavorable reaction

Our boss is sticking to his guns on his decision to fire the store manager.

stick to one's ribs

- to last a long time and give one strength (used for food)

The food at the restaurant is wonderful and it sticks to our ribs.

stick to (something)

- to never change or abandon something, to keep something

The man tried to stick to his opinions during the discussion.

stick to the facts

- to remain faithful to the facts about something

"Please stick to the facts when you tell the story to the police."

stick together

- to remain together as a group

The children like to stick together when they go to the beach.

stick up

- to point up

The boy's hair was sticking up in the back.

stick up (someone or something) or stick (someone or something) up

- to rob someone or something with a gun or other weapon

A man with a gun tried to stick up the small store.

stick up for (someone or something)

- to defend or help or support someone

My boss always sticks up for the younger workers at our company.

stick with (something)

- to continue doing something, to not quit something

The boy has been able to stick with his trumpet lessons since he was a child.

sticky fingers

- fingers that steal things that one sees and wants

The young boy has sticky fingers. You must watch him all the time.

stink to high heaven

- to smell very bad

The kitchen garbage was stinking to high heaven in the hot sun.

stir (someone or something) up or stir up (someone or something)

- to make someone angry or excited, to cause trouble

The man's angry words stirred up the crowd and made everybody angry.

stir up a hornet's nest

- to make many people angry or dislike something, to provoke your critics

The man stirred up a hornet's nest when he began to complain about the bonus system at his company.

stock up on (something)

- to gather a supply of something

We are trying to stock up on food before the holiday.

stone-broke

- having no money

I was stone-broke after I came back from my holiday.

stone's throw away from (something)

- to be very close to something

The new store is a stone's throw away from the large supermarket.

stoop to (doing something)

- to do something that is beneath one

I do not plan to stoop to asking my friend for money.

stop Idioms

stop-and-go

- stopping and going repeatedly

The traffic is always stop-and-go during the morning rush hour.

stop at nothing (to do something)

- to do everything possible to accomplish something

My friend will stop at nothing to get what she wants.

stop by (somewhere)

- to visit or pass by somewhere

"Why don't you stop by my house on your way home?"

stop dead

- to stop very quickly or with great force

The man stopped dead when he saw the bear in the middle of the road.

stop in one's tracks

- to stop very quickly or with great force

The horse was forced to stop in its tracks at the electric fence.

stop, look, and listen

- to be careful at street corners to stop and then look and listen for other cars.

We taught the children to stop, look, and listen when they cross the street.

stop off (somewhere)

- to stop at a place for a short time while going somewhere

We decided to stop off at the fish store before we went home.

stop over (somewhere)

- to stay at a place overnight or for a short time while on a trip

The airplane had to stop over in Alaska because one of the passengers had a heart attack.

stop short of (doing something)

- to not go as far as to do something

We stopped short of asking the secretary to leave although she continued to make mistakes with her work.

a storm is brewing

- there is going to be trouble

A storm is brewing between the two government departments over the tax issue.

the straight and narrow

- a straight and law-abiding route through life

The boy took the straight and narrow after he was in trouble with the law.

straight from the horse's mouth

- directly from the person involved

I heard about my friend's wedding straight from the horse's mouth.

straight from the shoulder

- an open and honest way of speaking

My friend always speaks straight from the shoulder.

straight out

- plainly, in a way that hides nothing

The man was told straight out that his work was not satisfactory.

straighten out (someone or something) or straighten (someone or something) out

- to cause someone's bad behavior to improve, to organize or fix something that is in confusion or disorder

I went to the bank to straighten out the problem with my credit card.

straighten (something) up or straighten up (something)

- to put something in order, to clean and make something neat

We had to straighten up the house before inviting my parents for dinner.

a stranger to (someone or something or somewhere)

- someone who is new and unknown to a person/place/thing

The man is a stranger to computers and does not know anything about them.

strapped for cash

- to have little or no money available for something

I am strapped for cash so I will not be able to go away this summer.

a straw in the wind

- a small sign of what may happen in the future

When the company began to reduce expenses it was a straw in the wind as to what would happen in the future.

straw that breaks the camel's back

- a small problem which follows other problems and which makes you lose patience and be unable to continue as before

When the receptionist lost the key to the office for the third time it was the straw that broke the camel's back and we decided to fire her.

stretch one's legs

- to walk around after sitting down or lying down for a period of time

We stopped to stretch our legs after driving for several hours.

stretch the point

- to interpret a point very flexibly, to exaggerate something

It is stretching the point to think that the new company policy will let us take a two-hour lunch break.

stretch the truth

- to exaggerate

I stretched the truth a little when I told my friend about my job experience.

strictly on the level

- honest, dependable, open and fair

The salespeople that I deal with are always strictly on the level.

strictly on the up-and-up

- honest, fair and straight

I only plan to do business with my friend if everything is strictly on the up-and-up.

strike Idioms

strike a balance (between two or more things)

- to find a satisfactory compromise between two extremes

My father works hard to strike a balance between his family and his job.

strike a bargain

- to make an agreement about something

I was able to strike a bargain with my neighbor to buy his car.

strike a chord with (someone)

- to remind someone of something, to be familiar to someone, to evoke a reaction/response/emotion

The song on the radio struck a chord with me and reminded me of my university days.

The name does not strike a chord with me.

strike a happy medium

- to find a compromise position

The manager always tries to strike a happy medium between being professional and being friendly to the staff.

strike a match

- to light a match

I struck a match and tried to start the fire.

strike a pose

- to position oneself in a certain posture or pose

The model was asked to strike a pose for the photographer.

strike a sour note

- to signify something unpleasant

The statements of the speaker struck a sour note with many members of the audience.

strike it rich

- to suddenly become rich or successful

The man struck it rich when he got a job at the computer company and was able to buy some stock very cheap.

strike out

- in baseball a player is "out" after three strikes

The baseball player did not strike out at all during the game.

strike out

- to fail

We struck out in our attempt to build a new cafeteria in our building.

strike out at (someone or something)

- to hit at or attack someone or something

The boy struck out at his friend in the playground.

strike (someone) as funny

- to seem funny to someone

The comments of my teacher often strike me as funny.

strike (someone) as (something)

- to affect someone a certain way

It strikes me as a little silly that the man is planning to buy a new motorcycle.

strike (someone's) fancy

- to appeal to someone

It did not strike my fancy to go to a restaurant last evening.

strike the right note

- to do something suitable or pleasing

I believe that my presentation struck the right note at the meeting last night.

strike up a conversation with (someone)

- to start a conversation with someone

I decided not to strike up a conversation with the man at the bus station.

strike up a friendship with (someone)

- to become friends with someone

My neighbor finds it easy to strike up a friendship with new people.

strike while the iron is hot

- to take advantage of an opportunity

I wanted to strike while the iron was hot so I quickly applied for the job.

string along with (someone)

- to accompany someone

I decided to string along with my friends when they went to the movie.

string (someone) along or string along (someone)

- to deceive or fool someone

The man tried to string me along with a story about his sick mother.

string (something) out or string out (something)

- to extend something over a great distance or over a long period of time

The soccer games were strung out over a period of four weeks.

strings attached

- obligations, restraining conditions

My friend was able to borrow the money for the furniture with no strings attached.

There were several strings attached to the offer.

a stroke of luck

- a bit of luck

It was a stroke of luck that I was able to get a plane reservation to visit my family.

struggle to the death

- a bitter struggle either to success or failure

The lion and the tiger were engaged in a struggle to the death.

stuck in a rut

- to be in an established way of living that never changes (although you may want it to change)

My neighbor is stuck in a rut and would like to change jobs.

stuck in traffic

- to be caught in a traffic jam

We were stuck in traffic for about one hour this morning.

stuck on (someone)

- to be very much in love with someone, to be crazy about someone

My niece has been stuck on the boy next door for several years now.

stuck on (something)

- to be locked into an idea or cause or purpose

The man is stuck on the idea of going to a hot place for his vacation.

stuck up

- to act as if other people are not as good as you are, to be conceited

We do not like the woman because she is stuck up and thinks that she is better than the rest of us.

stuck with (someone or something)

- to be burdened with someone or something

When my sister went to the doctor I was stuck with looking after her dog.

stuff and nonsense

- nonsense

The ideas of the professor are all stuff and nonsense.

stuff the ballot box

- to put false ballots into a ballot box during an election

The man was arrested because he was stuffing the ballot box during the election.

a stuffed shirt

- a person who is too rigid or too formal

The man is a stuffed shirt and I never feel comfortable when I talk with him.

stumble across/into (someone)

- to meet someone accidentally

I stumbled into my friend when I was shopping yesterday.

stumble across/upon (someone or something)

- to find someone or something by accident or in an unplanned manner

I stumbled across a very nice restaurant last weekend.

I stumbled across a good carpenter yesterday.

stumble into (somewhere)

- to enter a place by stumbling

I stumbled into my bedroom and went to bed.

stumbling block

- something that prevents or obstructs progress

The salary issue was a stumbling block in the negotiations between the company and the union.

subject to (something)

- depending on something, likely to have something

The purchase of the house was subject to several conditions.

subscribe to (something)

- to regularly receive a magazine or something similar, to give support or consent to something

I subscribe to several magazines but I do not have time to read them.

I do not subscribe to our teacher's ideas about many topics.

such and such

- someone or something whose name has been forgotten

My friend is always trying to borrow such and such from me but I always say no.

such as

- of a particular kind, for example

I need various tools such as a hammer and a saw in order to complete the job.

such as it is

- in the less-than-perfect condition in which one finds something

I received the old car such as it is but it is not worth very much.

suck (someone) in or suck in (someone)

- to deceive someone

The man always sucks me in with his long and strange stories.

sucker list

- a list of people who can be easily persuaded to buy something

The salesman used a sucker list to try and sell his new product.

sugar daddy

- a rich older man who gives money to a younger woman for her companionship

The woman went on a winter holiday with her sugar daddy.

sugarcoat (something)

- to make something that is unpleasant seem more pleasant, to coat something with sugar

The government tried to sugarcoat the new policy but nobody was happy with it.

suggestive of (something)

- to be reminiscent of something

The movie was suggestive of a time that disappeared many years ago.

suit oneself

- to do something one's own way to please oneself

I was able to do everything to suit myself while I stayed with my uncle.

suit (someone) to a T

- to be very appropriate for someone

My new job suits me to a T.

sum and substance

- a summary, the gist of something

The sum and substance of what the speaker said was very interesting.

sum (something) up or sum up (something)

- to put something into a few words, to summarize something

The speaker summed up his presentation and asked the audience for questions.

sunny-side up

- eggs that are fried on one side only

We asked for our eggs to be fried sunny-side up at the restaurant.

supply and demand

- the availability of something compared to the need or demand for something

The supply and demand for used sporting equipment is always very tight.

supposed to do (something)

- to be expected or intend to do something

I was supposed to meet my friend but I forgot.

a sure thing

- something that is sure to happen, something about which there is no doubt

My promotion to manager is a sure thing according to the company president.

Sure thing.

- of course, certainly

"Sure thing, I will be happy to help you move next Saturday."

survival of the fittest

- the idea that the most able or fit will survive

It is the survival of the fittest in the jungle.

susceptable to (something)

- to be easily persuaded, to be easily influenced, to likely to become sick

The young boy is very susceptible to the influence of the older boys around him.

The girl is susceptible to often getting a sore throat.

swallow one's pride

- to bring one's pride under control, to become humble

I had to swallow my pride and ask my father for some money.

swallow (something) hook, line, and sinker

- to believe something completely when someone is trying to deceive you

I swallowed the story hook, line, and sinker about how my friend lost his car keys.

swamped with (something)

- to be overwhelmed with something

"I am swamped with work and cannot meet you tonight."

swan song

- a final appearance

The manager was a big hit during his swan song at the company last week.

swear by (something)

- to have complete confidence in something, to be sure of something

My father swears by the walk that he takes every morning.

swear off (something)

- to decide to give up something that you are in the habit of using

My friend plans to swear off tobacco.

swear on a stack of Bibles

- to promise solemnly that what one is about to say is true

The man swore on a stack of Bibles that he did not take any money from the cash register.

swear on (something)

- to use something as the reason or authority that what you are saying is the truth

The accused criminal was asked to swear on a religious text at the trial to make sure that he was telling the truth.

swear (someone) in or swear in (someone)

- to have a person promise to do his or her duty as a member of an organization or in a formal position.

The new mayor of the city was sworn in at a large ceremony last evening.

sweat bullets/blood

- to be nervous, to be very worried

I was sweating bullets during the job interview.

sweat (something) out or sweat out (something)

- to wait anxiously for something, to worry about something

I spent the day sweating out whether or not I would get the job.

sweep out of (somewhere)

- to leave somewhere in a dramatic way

The actress swept out of the room when her performance finished.

sweep (someone) off his or her feet

- to overcome someone with strong feelings

We were swept off our feet by the excitement of the ceremony.

sweep (something) under the rug/carpet

- to hide or dismiss something casually

The couple always sweep their problems under the rug and never want to discuss them.

sweet and sour

- a combination of sweet and sour tastes (found in many Chinese dishes)

The dish had a sweet and sour taste that was very delicious.

sweet nothings

- affectionate but unimportant words that you say to someone you love

The boy in the movie whispered sweet nothings to his girlfriend.

sweet on (someone)

- to be in love with someone, to be very fond of someone

The boy was sweet on the girl next door when he was a child.

sweeten the deal

- to offer something during a negotiation that is attractive to the other side

We sweetened the deal during the negotiations in order to win the new contract.

sweet-talk (someone)

- to praise or flatter someone to get what you want

The little girl tried to sweet-talk her mother into buying her a present.

sweetie pie

- darling, sweetheart

The young man always calls his girlfriend sweetie pie.

swelled head

- a feeling that one is more important than one really is

The man has a swelled head since he got the new position in his company.

swift and sure

- fast and certain

I made a complaint to the bank manager and I knew that the answer would come back swift and sure.

swim against the current

- to do the opposite of what most people are doing

My friend likes to swim against the current and not do what others are doing.

swim against the tide

- to do the opposite of what most people are doing

Our company often swims against the tide in the way that they market products.

swing into action

- to start doing something

The members of the football team swung into action and cleaned the room after the party.

swing (something)

- to make something happen

I do not know if I can swing buying an expensive present for my girlfriend.

switched on

- to be in tune with the latest fads or ideas or fashions

My aunt is switched on and knows everything about many recent movies.

T

table a discussion

- to postpone a discussion until a later time

We tabled the discussion about the salary issue until the next meeting.

table a motion

- to postpone the discussion of something during a meeting

We tabled a motion to discuss the safety issue at another time.

tackle a problem

- to attack a problem with much effort (from American football where one player tackles another player)

All of the members of the sales team gathered to tackle the problem of decreasing sales.

tag along with (someone)

- to go somewhere with someone, to follow along with someone

The little boy tagged along with his older brother when they went to the beach.

tail between one's legs

- feeling ashamed or beaten

The salesman resigned from his company with his tail between his legs after he told a lie about his expense account.

tail wagging the dog

- a situation where a small part of something controls the larger part

The tail is wagging the dog and the receptionist controls everything in the office.

take Idioms

take a backseat to (someone or something)

- to accept a poorer or lower position than someone, to be second to someone or something

I had to take a backseat to my boss when we went on the business trip.

take a bath

- to bathe

The boy always takes a bath in the evening.

take a bath (on something)

- to lose much money on something, to be ruined financially

My aunt took a bath on the stock market last year and she is afraid to buy stocks now.

take a beating

- to lose money

My father took a beating when he sold his car.

take a big bite out of one's paycheck

- to decrease one's paycheck because of some kind of deduction

The new tax has begun to take a big bite out of my paycheck.

take a bow

- to bow and receive credit for a good performance

The violinist stopped to take a bow before she went backstage with the orchestra.

take a break

- to have a short rest period in one's work

I stopped to take a break after working all morning.

take a chance

- to try something where failure is possible

I will take a chance and visit my friend without phoning first.

take a course in (something)

- to enroll in a class to study or learn something

I am planning to take a course in photography next year.

take a crack at (something)

- to try or attempt to do something

"Have you decided to take a crack at writing the entrance examination?"

take a dig at (someone)

- to criticize someone, to say something that will irritate someone

The man is always taking a dig at his wife.

take a dim view of (something)

- to be against something, to disapprove of something

Our company takes a dim view of people who do not wear a suit and tie.

take a fancy to (someone or something)

- to develop a fondness or a preference for someone or something

The woman took a fancy to her new coworker.

take a gander at (someone or something)

- to examine someone or something, to take a look at someone or something

I asked the car mechanic to take a gander at the steering system on my car.

take a hand in (something)

- to help plan or do something

The man is always ready to take a hand in any work that needs to be done.

take a hard line (with someone)

- to be firm with someone, to have a firm policy for dealing with someone

The company takes a hard line with people who come to work late.

take a hint

- to understand what is hinted at and behave accordingly

The man is unable to take a hint and does not notice when people want him to leave.

take a leaf out of (someone's) book

- to behave or do something in the way that someone else would

We plan to take a leaf out of our competitor's book and advertise our product on the Internet.

take a letter

- to write down the words that someone says and later type them into a letter

The secretary often has to take a letter for her boss.

take a leak

- to urinate

The man stopped at the side of the road to take a leak.

take a liking to (someone or something)

- to develop a fondness or a preference for someone or something

I took a liking to my new neighbor immediately.

take a look at (someone or something)

- to examine (usually briefly) someone or something

I will take a look at the problem with the computer tomorrow.

take a look for (someone or something)

- to look for someone or something

Tomorrow, I will take a look for the pen which I lost.

take a nap

- to have a brief period of sleep

I want to take a nap before I visit my parents.

take a new turn

- to begin a new course or direction

The campaign to clean up the river took a new turn when the electric company joined the campaign.

take a pay cut

- to accept a decrease in one's salary

The workers in the factory were asked to take a pay cut.

take a potshot at (someone or something)

- to criticize someone or something

The mayor of the city decided to take a potshot at his opponent in the election.

take a powder

- to leave quickly, to run away

I took a powder immediately after the meeting.

take a punch at (someone)

- to strike someone with one's fist

The man in the restaurant suddenly took a punch at the waiter.

take a rain check

- to get a promise to repeat an invitation at a later date

I was invited to dinner by my friend but I took a rain check because I was too tired.

take a risk

- to try something where failure is possible

We will take a risk and go to the popular restaurant without a reservation.

take a shine to (someone)

- to have or show a quick liking for someone

Our daughter took a shine to her new teacher immediately.

take a shot at (something or doing something)

- to try to do something

I plan to take a shot at golfing when I am on vacation.

take a sick day

- to be absent from work and still receive pay

I did not feel well yesterday so I decided to take a sick day.

take a shower

- to shower

I usually take a shower when I get home from work.

take a spill

- to fall, to tip over

The little boy took a spill when he was learning how to ride his bicycle.

take a stab at (something or doing something)

- to try to do something

I took a stab at the math problem but I could not solve it.

take a stand on (something)

- to declare firmly that one is for or against something

The politician was forced to take a stand on the tax issue.

take a toll on (someone or something)

- to damage or hurt someone or something by using it too much or by hard living

The stress and long hours at work are beginning to take a toll on my friend.

take a trip

- to go for a journey

We plan to take a trip to Italy in November.

take a turn for the better

- to begin to improve or get well

The medical condition of my uncle has recently taken a turn for the better.

take a turn for the worse

- to start to get worse

The condition of the patient suddenly took a turn for the worse.

take a vacation

- to go somewhere for a vacation

I have much stress at work so I want to take a vacation next month.

take a walk/stroll/hike

- to go for a walk or stroll or hike

The man likes to take a walk every morning.

take a whack at (someone)

- to hit someone

The man on the bus suddenly took a whack at the man sitting beside him.

take a whack at (something)

- to try something

I took a whack at fixing the car but I was unsuccessful.

take action on (something)

- to deal with something

The city is finally going to take action on the homeless problem.

take advantage of (someone or something)

- to use someone or something for one's own benefit

We took advantage of the beautiful weather and went to the beach.

take after (someone)

- to resemble or act like someone (usually a parent or relative)

The boy is tall and handsome like his father and takes after him in many other ways as well.

take aim at (someone or something)

- to aim a gun/camera/policy at someone or something, to focus one's attention at someone or something

The police plan to take aim at people who do not stop at stop signs.

take an interest in (something)

- to develop an interest in something

Recently, my cousin has taken an interest in fishing.

take an oath

- to make an oath, to swear to something

I had to take an oath before I could answer questions at the public hearing.

take apart (something) or take (something) apart

- to separate the parts of something, to disassemble something

I took apart the watch easily but it never worked again.

take attendance

- to make a record of persons attending something

Our teacher always takes attendance when we arrive in the morning.

take back (something) or take (something) back

- to admit to making a wrong statement

The man was asked to take back what he had said about his boss.

take back (something) or take (something) back

- to return a bought or borrowed item to the place where you got it

I need to take back some books to the library.

take care of (someone or something)

- to look after or give attention to someone or something

You should take care of your health or you will become sick.

take care of (something)

- to deal with something, to do what is necessary to accomplish something

"Could you please take care of these letters while I make some phone calls."

take charge of (someone or something)

- to take control of someone or something

The new supervisor quickly took charge of the staff in the fast food restaurant.

take down (something) or take (something) down

- to write or record something that is said at a meeting/lecture/discussion

I took down many notes during the lecture last week.

take down (something) or take (something) down

- to take something apart, to pull something to pieces

We took down our tent when it began to rain.

take down (something) or take (something) down

- to remove something from an elevated place
I took down the picture in order to change the frame.

take effect

- to become legally operative, to begin
The new traffic laws took effect early last month.

take exception to (something)

- to speak against something, to find fault with something, to be angered by something
The man took exception to the fact that everyone was able to play golf well except him.

take first place

- to win something, to be the most important
The boy took first place in the contest.

take five

- to take a five-minute rest period
We decided to take five before continuing with our work.

take great pains to do (something)

- to make a great effort to do something
The painters took great pains not to spill any paint on the carpet.

take heart

- to be encouraged, to feel brave and want to try something
I took heart from my previous failure and decided to try again.

take heed

- to be cautious
It is best to take heed when you are crossing the street.

take hold of (someone or something)

- to get in control of someone or something
Something seemed to take hold of the man and he began to act very strange.

take hold of (something)

- to grasp something, to grip something with the hands
I took hold of the strap when I entered the train.

take ill

- to become sick
The woman took ill during her holiday and spent most of the time in her hotel.

take in money or take money in

- to receive or get money
We were able to take in a lot of money at the charity auction.

take in (someone) or take (someone) in

- to let someone come in, to admit someone
The farmer took the couple in for the night after their car stopped working.

take in (someone) or take (someone) in

- to deceive someone, to fool someone
The bad lawyer took in many people and took much of their money.

take in (someone) or take (someone) in

- to take someone to a police station for processing
The police took the man in for questioning.

take in (something) or take (something) in

- to go and see or visit something
We decided to take in a movie last night.

take in (something) or take (something) in

- to make something smaller
The tailor took in the waist of my suit pants and now they fit much better.

take in (something) or take (something) in

- to grasp something with the mind

The course was very difficult but I tried to take in as much as possible.

take inventory

- to make an inventory list, to count the goods in a store or warehouse

We stayed late at our store to take inventory.

take issue with (someone or something)

- to argue with someone, to dispute a point with someone, to dispute something

I decided to take issue with my supervisor when he began to criticize my work.

I took issue with my new work schedule.

take it

- to endure trouble or criticism or abuse

My friend is quite sensitive and cannot take it when I make a joke about him.

take it

- to get an idea or impression, to understand something from what is said or done

"I take it that you are not going to come to the graduation ceremony next week."

take it away

- to start up a performance

"Let's take it away and get the music started."

take it easy

- to relax

I have been working hard recently. Now I will take it easy for a few days.

take it easy on (someone or something)

- to be gentle, to use less of something rather than more

I tried to take it easy on the sugar when I was making the fruit punch.

take it on the chin

- to be badly beaten or hurt, to accept trouble calmly

Our team took it on the chin at the baseball tournament last week.

take it or leave it

- to accept something or forget it

The customer was told to take it or leave it when he began to complain about the product.

take it out on (someone or something)

- to be unpleasant or unkind to someone because one is angry or upset

The man has much stress at work but he is careful not to take it out on his friends or family.

take it slow

- to move or go slowly

I always take it slow when I am driving at night.

take it upon oneself (to do something)

- to undertake to do something, to make something one's responsibility

I decided to take it upon myself to fix the broken window in our apartment.

take its toll

- to cause loss or damage

My father's new job and the long hours have begun to take its toll on his health.

take kindly to (someone or something)

- to be pleased by someone or something, to be agreeable to someone or something

The man does not take kindly to people telling him how to run his business.

take leave of one's senses

- to become irrational

I think that my neighbor has taken leave of his senses. He has been acting very strange lately.

take liberties with (someone or something)

- to use or abuse someone or something

The girl is taking liberties with her friend by always borrowing her car.

take lunch

- to go on one's lunch break

I plan to take lunch early today.

take no stock in (something)

- to pay no attention to something

I usually take no stock in what my neighbor says.

take note of (something)

- to observe and remember something

The police are taking note of people who do any illegal business.

take notice of (something)

- to observe something

The city workers take notice of the businesses which do not follow the local garbage regulations.

take off

- to depart suddenly or quickly, to run away

We decided to take off when the concert ended.

take off

- to leave (used for an airplane)

The flight took off right on time.

take off after (someone or something)

- to begin to chase someone or something

The fox took off after the rabbit which jumped out of the hole.

take off clothes or shoes etc.

- to remove clothes or shoes etc.

"Please take off your shoes before you enter our house."

take off one's hat to (someone)

- to offer praise for someone's good accomplishments

You have to take off your hat to the person who organized the sporting event.

take off some time or take some time off

- to be absent from work

I was sick and I had to take off a week from work.

take off weight or take weight off

- to decrease one's weight

My friend is trying to take off weight with her new diet.

take offense at (someone or something)

- to become resentful of someone or something

The audience took offense at the remarks by the comedian.

take office

- to begin serving as an elected or appointed official

The new mayor of the city is expected to take office next week.

take on (someone) or take (someone) on

- to give a job to someone, to hire or employ someone

The factory took on fifty new employees last month.

take on (something) or take (something) on

- to begin to do something, to commit oneself to something

Recently, my father has begun to take on too many things at work and he has become very tired.

I took on the extra work to make some more money.

take on (something) or take (something) on

- to load (something)

The ship took on most of its cargo last week.

take on the look or appearance of (something)

- to begin to have the look of something

My friend has begun to take on the look of a university professor although he has only been working at the university for a short time.

take on too much or take too much on

- to undertake to do too much work or too many tasks

My aunt is taking on too much and is very tired recently.

take one's cue from (someone)

- to use another's behavior or reactions as a guide to one's own

The musicians took their cue from the conductor when the orchestra performed the musical piece.

take one's hat off to (someone)

- to admire/respect/praise someone

You have to take your hat off to our boss. He has built his company from almost nothing.

take one's leave of (someone)

- to say goodbye to someone and leave (a formal old-fashioned expression)

The Princess took her leave of the Queen and left the room.

take one's medicine

- to swallow one's medicine

The boy had to take his medicine before he went to bed.

take one's own life

- to kill oneself, to commit suicide

The young man took his own life several weeks ago.

take one's own medicine

- to accept the punishment that one deserves for something without complaining

The man likes to criticize others but he can never take his own medicine when others criticize him.

take one's time

- to do something without hurrying

My friend took his time to return the book that he had borrowed.

take out a loan

- to get a loan of money

I had to take out a loan to buy the car.

take out (someone) or take (someone) out

- to go on a date with someone

I finally had a chance to take out the new woman from my class last week.

take out (something) or take (something) out

- to remove something from somewhere, to extract something

The teacher asked us to take out our books.

I took out some onions from the refrigerator.

take over (something) or take (something) over

- to take control of something, to take command of something

A large foreign company took control of our company last month.

take pains to (do something)

- to work carefully and conscientiously at something

I took pains to write a very important email.

take part in (something)

- to participate in something

"Are you planning to take part in the seminar next week?"

take pity on (someone or something)

- to feel sorry for someone or something

I took pity on the man who was begging and I gave him some money.

take place

- to happen, to occur

The soccer game took place on the coldest day of the year.

take precedence over (someone or something)

- to have the right to come before someone or something else

The rights of people who do not smoke often take precedence over the rights of smokers.

take pride in (something)

- to do something with pride

The couple take pride in their beautiful house.

take responsibility for (someone or something)

- to accept responsibility for (someone or something)

My friend refuses to take responsibility for his problems.

take root

- to begin to take hold or have effect

Good manners are beginning to take root in the school children.

take shape

- to progress from some general idea or plan to something with definite shape or form

The plans for our school reunion are beginning to take shape.

take sick

- to become ill

The little boy took sick early last night.

take sides

- to support one side or the other side

"You should not take sides in some arguments or both sides will be angry at you."

take (someone or something) at face value

- to take someone or something as it first appears to be

I took the sign at face value and drove very slowly through the construction area.

take (someone) at his or her word

- to believe what someone says and act accordingly

I decided to take the woman at her word when she invited me to the concert.

take (someone's) breath away

- to overwhelm someone with beauty or grandeur

The beauty of the mountains took my breath away.

take (someone or somewhere) by storm

- to win the favor of someone or somewhere, to become popular with a group of people

The new rock band took the country by storm.

take (someone) by surprise

- to startle someone, to surprise someone

The sudden resignation of the mayor took everyone by surprise.

take (someone) down a notch/peg or two

- to reprimand or scold someone who is acting arrogant, to make someone less proud or sure of himself or herself

The manager took the secretary down a notch or two with his criticism of her work.

take (someone) for a fool

- to assume that someone is stupid

The salesman tried to take me for a fool when he tried to sell me the old car.

take (someone) for a ride

- to play a trick on or fool someone, to take unfair advantage of someone

The used car salesman took me for a ride. The car that I bought is not very good.

take (someone) for an idiot

- to assume that someone is stupid

The man takes me for an idiot and thinks that I do not know anything.

take (someone) for granted

- to accept someone without gratitude or as a matter of course

Everybody takes the office clerk for granted and nobody ever thanks her.

take (someone) for (someone or something)

- to mistake someone for someone or something

The man took the boy for a robber and called the police.

take (someone) hostage

- to kidnap or seize someone to be a hostage

The bank robbers took several people hostage during the bank robbery.

take (someone) into one's confidence

- to tell a secret to someone and trust that person to keep the secret

The bank manager took the customer into his confidence and told him about the banking problems.

take (someone's) part

- to take a side in an argument

My friend always takes my part when I am having an argument with someone.

take (someone's) pulse

- to measure the beats of a person's pulse

The doctor took the patient's pulse when she arrived at the hospital.

take (someone or something) seriously

- to think that someone or something is important

The principal did not take the suggestion of the teacher seriously.

take (someone) to task

- to scold someone for something that they have done wrong

The supervisor took me to task for arriving late for work.

take (someone) to the cleaners

- to take or win all of someone's money, to cheat someone

The salesman took the woman to the cleaners when he sold her the bad product.

The man went to the casino and was taken to the cleaners by the card dealers.

take (someone) under one's wing/wings

- to protect and help someone

The supervisor took the new employee under his wing and began to teach him about the company.

take (someone) up on (something)

- to take advantage of someone's offer of something

I took my friend up on his offer to let me borrow his new car.

take (someone or something) wrong

- to misunderstand someone or something

The man took what I said wrong and became very angry.

take (something)

- to endure something

I find it very difficult to take the woman's constant complaining.

take (something) by storm

- to capture something by a sudden or very bold attack

The army took the town by storm and was able to capture all of the enemy soldiers.

take (something) for granted

- to assume that something is a certain way or is correct

"I took it for granted that you knew him. That is why I did not introduce you."

take (something) in stride

- to accept good or bad luck and continue on

The boxer took his loss in stride and began to prepare for his next fight.

take (something) into account

- to remember and consider something

"Please take into account the fact that the girl has only been studying French for a few weeks."

take (something) lying down

- to endure something unpleasant without fighting back

I am very angry and will not take what he says lying down.

take (something) on faith

- to accept or believe something with little or no evidence

I took it on faith that the friend of my boss was an honest person.

take (something) on the chin

- to experience and endure a direct blow or assault

The man always takes things on the chin and he never complains.

take (something) out on (someone or something)

- to direct one's anger or fear onto someone or something

The woman often takes her anger out on her husband.

take (something) personally

- to interpret a remark as if it were meant for oneself or critical of oneself

I wish that my colleague would not take everything that I say personally.

take (something) the wrong way

- to understand something as wrong or insulting

The waiter took my comments the wrong way and became angry.

take (something) to heart

- to consider something seriously

You should not really take what he says to heart. He is really very kind.

take (something) to one's grave

- to carry a secret with you until you die

The woman plans to take the secret about her sister to her grave.

take (something) to the bank

- to have or do something that is a sure thing, to do or have something that you can count on no matter what happens

The business proposal is a sure thing. You can take it to the bank.

take (something) up with (someone)

- to raise and discuss a matter with someone

Our supervisor plans to take the issue of overtime up with the senior managers.

take (something) with a grain of salt

- to not take something that someone has said seriously

You can take everything that our teacher says with a grain of salt.

take steps to (prevent or do something)

- to begin to make plans or arrangements for something, to make preparations for something

Our company has begun to take steps to stop people from smoking in the office building.

take stock

- to count items of merchandise or supplies that are in stock, to take inventory

The store will be closed next week while the company is taking stock.

take stock in (something)

- to have faith in something, to believe in something (usually used in the negative)

The woman took no stock in her manager's crazy ideas.

take stock of (something)

- to carefully study a situation or a number of possibilities or opportunities

After taking stock of the situation the man decided to quit his company.

take that tack

- to take a course of action or do something that is different from the preceding course of action

I decided to take that tack when I realized that I was making no progress with my previous plans.

take the bitter with the sweet

- to accept the bad things together with the good things

You have to take the bitter with the sweet when you are an athlete.

take the bull by the horns

- to take some kind of action

My aunt decided to take the bull by the horns and started to plan the family reunion.

take the cake

- to be the best or the worst

The woman's manners take the cake. They are very bad.

take the day off

- to choose not to go to work for one day

I decided to take the day off because I was feeling bad.

take the easy way out

- to avoid dealing directly with a problem/difficulty/situation

The boy always takes the easy way out when he has a problem.

take the edge off (something)

- to lessen or weaken or soften something

We had a drink of hot chocolate to take the edge off the cold weather.

take the Fifth

- to hide behind the Fifth Amendment of the United States Constitution which guarantees any witness the right not to incriminate himself or herself while testifying at a trial

The man decided to take the Fifth rather than tell all of the facts at the trial.

take the initiative to (do something)

- to decide to do something although one has not been asked to do it

I decided to take the initiative to organize a dinner for my friend who was leaving to go to a different university.

take the law into one's own hands

- to attempt to administer the law oneself

The citizens took the law into their own hands when they arrested the man who had cut down the tree.

take the liberty of (doing something)

- to assume the right to do something

I took the liberty of eating some food from my friend's refrigerator.

take the plunge

- to do something decisive (such as getting married)

My friend will take the plunge and get married next year.

take the rap for (someone or something)

- to receive punishment for something, to be accused and punished for something, to receive punishment in place of someone else

The owner of the restaurant was forced to take the rap for permitting underage workers to work at night.

take the stand

- to go and sit in the witness chair in a courtroom

The star witness will take the stand in the trial tomorrow.

take the starch out of (someone)

- to make someone less arrogant, to make someone tired and weak

The criticism by the teacher took the starch out of the girl who thought that she was the best in the class.

take the trouble to (do something)

- to make an effort to do something

My grandmother always takes the trouble to phone us on our birthdays.

take the wind out of one's sails

- to become discouraged and lose one's enthusiasm

It took the wind out of my sails when I was told that I was not doing a good job.

take the words out of (someone's) mouth

- to say something that someone else was going to say

The man took the words out of my mouth when he answered the question.

take time off

- to not work for a period of time

I plan to take time off next week so that I can go to a funeral.

take to one's heels

- to run away

The young boys took to their heels when the man came out of the building.

take to (someone or something)

- to like someone or something at first meeting, to be pleased by or attracted to someone or something, to accept someone or something quickly

The team took to the new coach immediately and did very well during the season.

take to (something)

- to begin the work or job of something, to learn something easily, to do well at something

The man took to the job of administrator and was a great success.

take to the woods

- to run away and hide

The man decided to take to the woods rather than wait to talk to his angry wife.

take turns (doing something)

- to do something alternately with others

We had to take turns using the dictionary because there was only one.

take umbrage at (something)

- to feel that one has been insulted by something

The man took umbrage at the comments that were directed at him by his supervisor.

take up a collection

- to gather something together, to collect something

We decided to take up a collection in order to get money to repair the old building.

take up arms against (someone or something)

- to get ready to fight or make war

The citizens of the small country were not willing to take up arms to change their government.

take up (clothes) or take (clothes) up

- to make a skirt/dress/pants shorter

I went back to the department store to ask them to take up my suit pants.

take up (something) or take (something) up

- to begin an activity or hobby

My father has much free time and has decided to take up fishing as a hobby.

take up (something) with (someone)

- to consult with someone about something

We will take up the scheduling problem with our boss.

take up (space or room)

- to fill a space or room, to occupy space or room

The old chairs are taking up space in the garage.

take up (time)

- to fill or occupy time, to waste someone's time

Building model airplanes takes up most of my friend's time.

take up where one left off

- to start something again in the place that one has stopped

We will take up where we left off during the next class.

take up with (someone)

- to become a friend or companion to someone

My cousin has taken up with a very strange group of people.

taken aback

- to be unpleasantly surprised, to be suddenly puzzled or shocked or confused

I was taken aback when the woman said that she did not want to work for our company any longer.

taken for dead

- to be assumed to be dead

The men in the coal mine were taken for dead after there was no contact for several days.

talk Idioms

talk a blue streak

- to talk very much and very rapidly

The woman who sat behind me in the airplane talked a blue streak.

talk back to (someone)

- to answer someone rudely

The woman is very strict and never allows her children to talk back to her.

talk big

- to talk boastfully, to brag

The man is always talking big but nobody believes what he says.

talk down to (someone)

- to use words or ideas that make you seem smarter or better than others

I do not like that woman because she always talks down to the people around her.

talk in circles

- to talk in a confusing or roundabout manner

Our boss was talking in circles for most of the meeting.

the talk of (somewhere)

- the subject of conversations somewhere

The new theater production is the talk of the city.

talk oneself out

- to talk until one can talk no more

I met my friend at the coffee shop and we talked ourselves out.

talk out (a problem)

- to discuss something until everything is agreed upon, to settle something

We stayed up late last night and talked out the problem.

talk over (something) or talk (something) over

- to discuss something, to consider something

The girl talked over the problem with her mother.

talk shop

- to talk about things related to one's work

Everybody at the company gathering agreed not to talk shop during the dinner.

talk (someone) down in price

- to convince someone to lower the price of something

I was able to talk the man down in price when I was buying the stereo.

talk (someone's) ear off

- to speak too much, to talk to someone and bore them

The man in the bank talked my ear off.

talk (someone's) head off

- to speak too much, to talk to someone and bore them

My friend always talks my head off when I meet him.

talk (someone) into (doing something)

- to persuade someone to agree to do something, to persuade someone to do something

My friend talked her father into lending her the family car.

talk (someone) out of (doing something)

- to persuade someone not to do something, to persuade someone to give something up

I spent an hour yesterday trying to talk my friend out of quitting his job.

talk through one's hat

- to make exaggerated or inaccurate statements about something

The man always talks through his hat and you never know if you can believe him or not.

talk turkey

- to discuss something seriously

"Now you're talking turkey. Let's finish and go home."

talk until one is blue in the face

- to talk until one is exhausted

I talked until I was blue in the face but still my supervisor would not let me take a day off from work.

talk up (someone or something)

- to speak in favor of someone or something

The manager was talking up the new product during the meeting.

to be talked out

- to be tired of talking, to be unable to talk anymore after talking for a long time

I was talked out and had little to say for the rest of the dinner party.

tamper with (something)

- to attempt to alter or change something

Someone tampered with the lock on the storage locker room.

tan (someone's) hide

- to give someone a beating, to spank someone hard

The boy's mother threatened to tan his hide if he did not behave himself.

taper off

- to come to an end little by little, to become smaller toward the end

The rain began to taper off early in the afternoon.

tar and feather (someone)

- to punish someone severely

The teacher said that she would tar and feather anyone who did not do their homework.

tarred with the same brush

- to have the same good or bad points (usually used for bad points) as someone else

The boy was tarred with the same brush as his bad friends.

a taste of (something)

- an experience of something, an example of something

I was able to get a taste of playing tennis while I was on my holiday.

a taste of things to come

- a sample of the events that are to occur in the future

The tax increase is a taste of things to come with the new government.

tax-and-spend

- spend freely and tax heavily

The government has a tax-and-spend attitude that many people do not like.

teach one's grandmother to suck eggs

- to try to tell someone with more knowledge than yourself how to do something

Showing the computer expert how to fix the computer problem was like teaching my grandmother to suck eggs.

teach (someone) a lesson

- to get even with someone for their bad behavior

I plan to teach my friend a lesson for not telephoning me to cancel our appointment.

teacher's pet

- the teacher's favorite student

My sister was always the teacher's pet when she was in school.

team player

- someone who works well with others to achieve some goal

The man is a team player and works well with the other members of the staff.

team up with (someone)

- to join with someone

I teamed up with a good friend to try and raise money for the concert.

tear down (someone) or tear (someone) down

- to say bad things about someone, to criticize someone

The audience tore down the speaker after he finished his lecture.

tear down (something) or tear (something) down

- to take something down, to destroy something

The city decided to tear down the building because it was unsafe.

tear into (someone or something)

- to criticize and scold someone, to attack someone or something

The supervisor tore into the employee for being late.

tear off

- to leave or depart in a great hurry

The boy suddenly tore off when school was over.

tear one's hair out

- to be anxious/frustrated/angry

The family members are tearing their hair out while they wait for news of their lost son.

tear up (someone) or tear (someone) up

- to cause someone much grief

The criminal activities of her son are tearing up the mother.

tear up (something) or tear (something) up

- to tear something up into small pieces, to tear something into parts

The child tore up the new telephone book.

teething problems

- difficulties and problems experienced in the early stages of a project or activity

Our new business is having many teething problems that we are trying to solve.

teething troubles

- difficulties and problems experienced in the early stages of a project or activity

There were lots of teething troubles as the school changed to the new computer system.

tell Idioms

tell apart (two things or people) or tell (two things or people) apart

- to distinguish between two things or people

It is hard to tell the two sisters apart.

tell it like it is

- to be honest or sincere, to tell the truth

Our boss always tells it like it is when he talks about the future of the company.

Tell it to the marines.

- I do not believe you, stop trying to fool me

My friend said that she was going to start her own business. I told her to tell it to the marines.

Tell it to Sweeney.

- I do not believe you, stop trying to fool me

"Tell it to Sweeney," I said to my friend when he began talking about his plans.

tell on (someone)

- to reveal the activities or wrongdoings of someone by telling others

The girl told on her brother for eating the cake.

tell (someone) a thing or two

- to scold someone, to express one's anger to someone

The woman became angry and began to tell her neighbor a thing or two.

tell (someone) off or tell off (someone)

- to speak angrily or complain to someone

We told our neighbors off after their music was too loud.

tell (someone) to his or her face

- to tell something to someone directly

I plan to tell my friend to his face about the problems that he caused.

tell (someone) where to get off

- to scold someone, to express one's anger to someone

I told the man where to get off when he complained about us for no reason.

tell time

- to report the correct time, to be able to read time from a clock or watch

The child is now learning to tell time.

a tempest in a teapot

- great excitement about something that is not very important

The problem was a tempest in a teapot and after a few days everyone forgot about it.

ten-four

- I understand you.

"Ten-four," the man said when his friend asked him if he could hear him.

tenterhooks

- to be in a state of suspense or strain because of uncertainty

We have been on tenterhooks all week while we wait for the court decision.

test market a product

- to research whether or not a product will be successful by selling it in a particular market or by choosing people to use the product for a specified period of time and receiving comments from them

The computer company will begin to test market their new computer in several cities soon.

test the water

- to check to see if a plan will be successful before proceeding with the plan (some swimmers like to test the water temperature before jumping in)

The company plans to test the water before they introduce their new product.

thank one's lucky stars

- to be thankful for one's good luck

I thanked my lucky stars that I was not hurt in the car accident.

thankful for small blessings

- to be grateful for any small benefits or advantages that one has

I am thankful for small blessings when I think of the health of my friends and family.

thanks to (someone or something)

- owing to someone or something

Thanks to my friend, I will not have to do as much work as I had thought.

That's all she wrote.

- that is all

"That's all she wrote," I said after I told my friend the story.

that will be the day

- something will probably never happen

"That will be the day when you are in charge of managing the restaurant."

then and there

- right at that time and place

Our teacher told us then and there that she would not permit our behavior.

thick

- to be dumb, to be unreasonable

My colleague is a little thick and never understands what I want to say.

thick-skinned

- to be not easily upset or hurt, to be insensitive

The salesman is thick-skinned and is never bothered when he loses a sale or receives criticism.

thin on top

- to be losing one's hair

The manager of our apartment building is a little thin on top.

thin-skinned

- to be easily upset or hurt, to be too sensitive

My friend is very thin-skinned and is easily bothered by what other people say.

think Idioms**think a great deal of (someone or something)**

- to like or think well of someone or something

Everybody thinks a great deal of the new company president.

think a lot of (someone or something)

- to like or think well of someone or something

My grandmother thinks a lot of her grandchildren.

think back on (someone or something)

- to remember and think about someone or something in one's past

When I think back on my school days I always remember my favorite teacher.

think better of (doing something)

- to think about something again and make a better decision regarding it

I would think better of going to Europe in the winter if I go there again.

think highly of (someone or something)

- to like or think well of someone or something

The citizens think highly of the new top judge.

think inside the box

- to think in a traditional way using old ideas or rules or practices

Most people in our company think inside the box and there are few new ideas.

think little of (someone or something)

- to think that someone or something is not important or valuable

The woman is not very happy and she thinks little of the people she works with.

think much of (someone or something)

- to like or think well of someone or something

Everybody thinks much of the new manager.

I do not think much of our new supervisor.

think nothing of (something)

- to not worry or be concerned about something

My friend thinks nothing of spending most of his money in one evening.

think on one's feet

- to think or reason or plan while one is talking

My boss can think on her feet and she can easily handle most problems.

think out loud

- to say out loud what one is thinking

"I am sorry. I was thinking out loud."

think out (something) or think (something) out

- to plan or consider something carefully until you have a solution/conclusion

We must think out where we will put our new sofa.

think outside the box

- to think freely not using old ideas or rules or practices

The consultant told us to think outside the box if we wanted to rebuild our company.

think over (something) or think (something) over

- to consider something carefully

I carefully thought over my plans before talking to my supervisor.

think (someone or something) fit for (something)

- to believe that someone or something is suitable for something

Everybody thinks that the man is fit for the job that he has been assigned to do.

think the world of (someone or something)

- to be very fond of someone or something

The woman thinks the world of the little girl who lives next door.

think twice (about something)

- to think very carefully about something

"You should think twice before you quit your job."

think up (an excuse or idea)

- to invent or create an excuse or idea

Our boss has thought up many interesting ideas for our company.

third degree

- detailed questioning

The boy's mother gave him the third degree when he came home late from school.

thirst for (something)

- a craving or desire for something, to thirst or crave something

The woman thirsts for the life that she was previously living.

She has a thirst for her previous life.

thirsty for (something)

- to crave or desire something

The young boy is thirsty for knowledge.

a thorn in (someone's) side

- a constant bother or annoyance to someone

The reporter is a thorn in the politician's side.

thrash (something) out or thrash out (something)

- to discuss something thoroughly in order to solve any problems

We spent the meeting thrashing out the new plan.

thread (one's way) through (something)

- to make a path for oneself through a crowded area

The shopping mall was crowded but we were able to thread our way through the crowd of people.

three sheets to the wind

- to be unsteady from drinking too much alcohol, to be drunk

I saw my neighbor walking down the street last night. He seemed to have three sheets to the wind.

thrill (someone) to death

- to please or excite someone very much

I was thrilled to death when they chose me for an important part in the play.

thrill (someone) to pieces

- to please or excite someone very much

The music that they played at the wedding thrilled me to pieces.

through and through

- completely

I was wet through and through after walking in the heavy rain.

through hell and high water

- through all sorts of severe difficulties

I went through hell and high water to complete the report on time.

through the grapevine

- from other people

I heard it through the grapevine that my boss will move to Paris next summer.

through the mill

- to experience a difficult situation

The man has been through the mill recently with his divorce and loss of job.

through thick and thin

- through all difficulties and troubles, through good times and bad times

The woman's husband is always ready to help her and supports her through thick and thin.

throw Idioms

throw a fit

- to become very angry

The boy's mother threw a fit when she heard about his problems at school.

throw a monkey wrench into the works

- to cause something that is going smoothly to stop going smoothly

My friend threw a monkey wrench into our plans to go to the lake for the summer.

throw a party (for someone) or throw (someone) a party

- to give or hold a party for someone

We plan to throw a party for our boss next week.

throw away a chance

- to fail to make use of a chance or opportunity

My cousin threw away a chance to get a good education when he quit school to work.

throw away an opportunity

- to fail to make use of a chance or opportunity

The man threw away the opportunity to have a good relationship with his boss because of his constant complaints.

throw away (something) or throw (something) away

- to discard something, to dispose of something

I plan to throw away my old jacket tomorrow.

throw caution to the wind

- to become very careless

I will throw caution to the wind and tell my boss about my complaints about the company.

throw cold water on (something)

- to discourage or forbid something

My boss threw cold water on my plan to go to New York City on a business trip.

throw down the gauntlet

- to challenge someone to a fight or to do something

The government threw down the gauntlet to the opposition party and told them to stop criticizing their policies without suggesting an alternative.

throw good money after bad

- to waste additional money after already wasting money on the same thing

We were throwing good money after bad when we continued to repair our old car.

throw in one's lot with (someone or something)

- to take part in something, to join someone or something

We decided to throw in our lot with the workers who were on strike.

throw in (something) or throw (something) in

- to give or add something as an addition

When we bought our car the car dealer threw in some new tires as a bonus.

throw in the towel

- to quit, to surrender, to give up

The boxer threw in the towel about halfway through the match.

throw off an illness

- to recover from a sickness

I was able to throw off my cold and quickly recover.

throw off (someone) or throw (someone) off

- to mislead or confuse or fool someone

The criminals threw off the police and ran into the subway.

throw one's hands up in despair

- to raise one's hands making a sign of giving up, to give up

I threw my hands up in despair and said that I could no longer work on the project.

throw one's hands up in horror

- to be shocked, to raise one's hands in horror

The woman threw her hands up in horror when she saw the accident.

throw one's hat into the ring

- to announce that one is running for an elected office

The mayor threw his hat into the ring and decided to run for national office.

throw one's voice

- to project one's voice so that it seems to be coming from some other place

The man learned how to throw his voice when he was a teenager.

throw one's weight around

- to use one's influence in an aggressive way

Our boss has been throwing his weight around ever since he got his promotion.

throw oneself at (someone)

- to give oneself willingly to someone for romance

The woman in the movie threw herself at the hero of the story.

throw oneself at (someone's) feet

- to behave in a very humble and contrite manner

I threw myself at the manager's feet and apologized for the mistake that I had made.

throw oneself at/on the mercy of the court

- to plead for mercy from a judge in a courtroom

The man who robbed the bank decided to throw himself at the mercy of the court.

throw out (someone) or throw (someone) out

- to force someone to leave, to dismiss someone

The umpire threw out the coach for arguing with him.

throw out (something) or throw (something) out

- to discard something, to get rid of something

I plan to throw out my old desk.

throw out (something) or throw (something) out

- to refuse to consider something, to reject something

The judge threw the case out of court.

throw some light on (something)

- to reveal something about something

The investigation did not throw any light on the problem of food safety.

throw (someone)

- to confuse someone slightly

It threw me when I saw the new salesman.

throw (someone) a curve (ball)

- to surprise someone by doing something unexpected, to pitch a curve ball to someone in baseball

The lawyer threw the witness a curve with his very complex questions.

throw (someone) for a loop

- to confuse or shock someone

The complaints from my colleague at work threw me for a loop.

throw (someone) for a loss

- to cause someone to be uncertain or confused

The man's question threw me for a loss and I could not reply.

throw (someone) off (someone's) trail

- to cause someone to lose the trail (when following someone or something)

The criminals were able to throw the police off their trail and they escaped easily.

throw (someone's) name around

- to impress people by saying that you know a famous or important person

The salesman often throws the names of important people around.

throw (someone) out on his or her ear

- to make someone leave a place such as an office or restaurant

The restaurant threw the man out on his ear for causing problems.

throw (someone) to the wolves

- to send someone into danger without protection

The coach threw the boy to the wolves when he joined the older players.

throw (something) into the bargain

- to include something in a deal

The owner of the store threw some DVD's into the bargain when I purchased a DVD player.

throw (something) together or throw together (something)

- to make something in a hurry and without care

We did not have much time last night so we threw together a quick meal.

throw the baby out with the bathwater

- to reject all of something including the good because part of it is bad

When they discarded all of the computers because one was broken it was like throwing the baby out with the bathwater. Only one was broken.

throw the book at (someone)

- to punish someone severely for breaking a rule or the law

The judge threw the book at the man after he was convicted of robbing a bank.

throw together (people) or throw (people) together

- to group people together by chance

We were thrown together with a variety of people when the train stopped for six hours.

throw up

- to vomit

The man threw up two times after he got food poisoning from the seafood.

throw up one's hands (in defeat)

- to give up trying, to admit that one cannot succeed

The professor threw up his hands and decided to let the students go home early.

throw up (something) or throw (something) up

- to erect or construct something quickly

The construction company threw up the building very quickly.

thrust and parry

- to compete actively with someone, to enter into verbal combat with someone (this idiom comes from the sport of fencing)

It was thrust and parry for the two candidates during the debate.

thumb a lift

- to hitchhike

Our car had a flat tire so I thumbed a lift to the nearest gas station.

thumb a ride

- to hitchhike

The young man stood at the side of the road to try and thumb a ride.

thumb one's nose at (someone or something)

- to look with disfavor or dislike at someone or something

The star player thumbed his nose at the fans when they began to yell at him.

thumb through (something)

- to look through a book/magazine/newspaper without reading it carefully

I thumbed through several magazines while I was waiting for the dentist.

thumbnail sketch

- a short description of someone or something

The new book included a thumbnail sketch of the author.

thumbs down on (someone or something)

- to be opposed to someone or something

My boss told me to vote thumbs down on the proposal that was presented at the meeting.

thumbs up on (someone or something)

- to be in favor of someone or something

Everybody voted thumbs up for a new holiday in the winter.

tickled pink

- to be very happy

The man was tickled pink to receive a prize for growing the best flowers.

tickle (someone's) fancy

- to interest someone, to make someone curious

Going to the restaurant did not tickle my fancy so I stayed home.

tide (someone) over or tide over (someone)

- to help someone through a difficult situation, to last until someone can get more of something

I gave my friend some money to tide him over until he gets paid.

I ate an apple to tide me over until lunch.

tie Idioms

tie down (someone) or tie (someone) down

- to keep someone from going somewhere or doing something, to limit or restrict someone's freedom to do something

The project tied my father down for three months.

A family and a big mortgage tied the man down.

tie down (something) or tie (something) down

- to make something secure and unable to move by securing it with rope etc.

We tied down the pieces of wood on top of the car.

tie in (something) with (something) or tie (something) in with (something)

- to connect something with something else

The merchandise was tied in with the movie and had very good sales.

tie (someone) up in knots

- to make someone very nervous or worried

My colleague was tied up in knots before the speech at the convention.

tie (someone's) hands

- to prevent someone from doing something

The court system ties the police department's hands when they try to enforce some laws.

tie the knot

- to get married

The couple decided to tie the knot after dating for three years.

tie up (a boat) or tie (a boat) up

- to dock a boat or ship

We tied up our boat at the pier when the storm came.

tie up (someone) or tie (someone) up

- to take all of someone's time

The meeting tied up the manager so she was unable to answer the phone.

tie up (something) or tie (something) up

- to limit or prevent the use of something

All of my uncle's money is tied up in real estate investments.

tie up (traffic)

- to slow down traffic, to cause road traffic to stop

The accident tied up traffic for two hours last night.

tie up with (someone or something)

- to enter into an association or partnership with someone or something

Our company will tie up with a company from Sweden to make the pollution equipment.

tied to one's mother's apron strings

- to be dominated or dependent on one's mother

The boy is tied to his mother's apron strings and he does not want to leave home.

tied up

- to be busy

I was tied up yesterday and did not have enough time to telephone my friend.

tight spot

- a difficult situation

We are in a very tight spot since the top salesman quit.

tight squeeze

- a difficult financial situation

Our company is in a tight squeeze now that sales are down from last year.

tighten one's belt

- to economize, to spend less money

I will have to tighten my belt until the economy improves.

tightfisted with money

- to not want to spend any money

The man is very tightfisted with money and he never likes to spend it.

tilt at windmills

- to fight battles with imaginary or unimportant enemies or issues

My friend is tilting at windmills by fighting his company for no good reason.

time Idioms

time after time

- repeatedly

The teacher told the student time after time to be careful with her spelling.

time and a half

- one and a half times one's regular wages that one receives for working past one's normal hours

The supermarket workers receive time and a half when they work on Saturday.

time and again

- repeatedly

The man was asked time and again to move his car.

time and time again

- repeatedly, over and over

The teacher told the students time and time again that they must do their homework.

time flies

- time passes very quickly

Time flies and suddenly summer was over and autumn had begun.

the time is ripe (for something)

- exactly the right time has come for something

The time is ripe to start teaching our child how to brush his teeth.

the time of one's life

- a wonderful time

My cousin had the time of her life when she went to Rome last summer.

time off

- free time when one does not have to work

I had some time off last week and I was able to do some extra reading.

time out

- the time when a game or other event is temporarily stopped for some reason

During the game we took some time out to rest.

time to catch one's breath

- enough time to relax and behave normally

I did not have time to catch my breath because I was working hard all morning.

time was (when)

- at a time in the past when something happened

Time was when everybody in our town kept their doors unlocked all of the time.

a tin ear for (something)

- the inability to judge the value of music, an insensitivity to music

The woman has a tin ear for music and she is not a good singer at all.

tip of the iceberg

- the small visible part of something much larger

The problem was the tip of the iceberg to a much larger problem.

tip (someone) off or tip off (someone)

- to warn or inform someone about something

The bank tipped off the police that there may be a robbery soon.

tip the balance

- to have important or decisive influence, to decide something

The man's ability to speak French tipped the balance in his favor to get the job at the embassy.

tip the scales at (something)

- to weigh a certain amount

The wrestler tipped the scales at over 200 kilograms.

tire (someone) out or tire out (someone)

- to make someone very tired

The climb up the stairs tired the elderly woman out.

tired out

- very tired

My father was tired out after working hard all day.

tit for tat

- equal treatment in return for something, a fair exchange

The government policy was tit for tat to any attacks against its territory.

to Idioms

to a fault

- to do something so very well or to be something so good that it is almost bad

My friend is honest to a fault and will not say anything unless it is the absolute truth.

to a great extent

- mainly, largely

To a great extent, everybody in the town has been informed of the new parking regulations.

to a large extent

- mainly, largely

We know to a large extent, how many people plan to attend the conference.

to a T

- perfectly, exactly

The new job fits me to a T.

to and fro

- from one place to another and then back again, back and forth

We went to and fro between the two items as we tried to decide what to buy.

to be on the safe side

- to be safe, to be cautious, to be very well prepared

I decided to take my umbrella to school to be on the safe side.

to be safe

- to be cautious, to be careful

I took some extra money out of the bank just to be safe and have enough money for the weekend.

to be sure

- without a doubt, certainly

"To be sure it would be better to talk to the store manager rather than the clerk."

to beat the band

- very much, very fast

We were working hard to beat the band in order to finish our work early and go home.

to boot

- in addition, also

Our hot water tank is not working and to boot our kitchen stove is also having problems.

to date

- until the present time

To date there is no indication that the workers will negotiate a new contract.

to heel

- to be under control

The army brought the citizens to heel when they entered the town.

to hell and gone

- very much gone, gone to hell

The situation was already to hell and gone when the manager arrived at the office.

to no avail

- with no effect, unsuccessful

My complaints to the company were to no avail and nothing was done.

to one's heart's content

- as much as one wants

I used the video camera to my heart's content before I had to return it to my friend.

to one's name

- in one's ownership

The man is a very good dresser although he does not have a penny to his name.

to order

- according to a buyer's specifications regarding size or color etc.

I bought three suits which were made to order when I visited Hong Kong last year.

to pieces

- into broken pieces or fragments, destroyed, not working

My car fell to pieces during my recent trip.

to pieces

- very much, greatly

The man loves his little girl to pieces.

to put it mildly

- to understate something, to say something politely

To put it mildly, the food at the restaurant was the worst that I have ever tasted.

to say nothing of (someone or something)

- to not even mention the importance of someone or something

The hotel itself was very expensive to say nothing of the cost of the hotel restaurant.

to say the least

- at the very least, without dwelling on the subject

To say the least, I am tired after walking all day.

to some extent

- to some degree, partly

My answer to the professor's question was correct to some extent but it was not what the professor wanted.

to (someone's) liking

- in a way that pleases someone

The cook in my favorite restaurant always cooks the food exactly to my liking.

to (someone's) way of thinking

- in someone's opinion

To my way of thinking we should not spend any more money on the new project.

to speak of

- important, worth talking about

We did not do anything to speak of during our summer vacation.

to the best of one's ability

- as well as one is able

I always play sports to the best of my ability.

to the best of one's knowledge

- as far as one knows, from one's knowledge

To the best of my knowledge there have been no telephone calls for me today.

to the bitter end

- to the very end

We stayed to the bitter end and watched our team lose very badly to the other team.

to the bone

- thoroughly, entirely

I became wet to the bone during the heavy rain.

to the contrary

- contrary to what has been stated or thought

Everybody thought that the boy was bored at the dinner but to the contrary he was quite interested.

to the core

- all the way through, basically

The local government is corrupt to the core and everybody wants the mayor to leave office.

to the ends of the earth

- to the most remote and most inaccessible points on the earth

My professor went to the ends of the earth to find material for his university thesis.

to the extent that

- to the degree that, in so far as

"To the extent that I am able, I will be happy to help you."

to the eye

- as it is seen, apparently

To the eye, the hotel looked very nice but when we entered it, it was not very good at all.

to the full

- very much, fully

My father always tries to live his life to the full.

to the hilt

- to the maximum amount, completely

My friend has been in debt to the hilt since he bought his new car.

to the last

- to the end, to the conclusion

We stayed at the party to the last and then helped clean the hall.

to the letter

- exactly, precisely

The police officer always follows the law to the letter.

to the nth degree

- to the greatest degree possible, extremely

We made an effort to the nth degree but we were unable to successfully complete the project.

to the tune of (an amount of money)

- to the amount or extent of an amount of money

The damage that he did to his car was to the tune of about \$2,000.

to the wall

- into a place from which there is no escape

The credit agency pushed the man to the wall and he finally had to declare bankruptcy.

to whom it may concern

- to the person to whom something applies

I do not know the name of the sales manager so I will address the letter, "to whom it may concern."

to wit

- namely, that is to say

There were several important people at the dinner; to wit, the mayor, the city manager, and the chief financial officer of the city.

toe the line

- to obey the rules and do what one is expected to do

The children were forced to toe the line when the new teacher arrived.

toe the mark

- to obey the rules and do what one is expected to do

Everybody on the team must toe the mark.

toe-to-toe

- in close and direct confrontation or competition with someone, in close combat with someone

The two men went toe-to-toe in their debate.

toing and froing (about something)

- to be moving back and forth on an issue, to be changing one's mind about something

My father and mother have been toing and froing for several weeks about whether or not they will go to Europe for a holiday.

tone (something) down or tone down (something)

- to make something less harsh or strong, to moderate something

The union leader was forced to tone down his language after the strike became violent.

tongue-in-cheek

- insincere, joking

The speaker made several tongue-in-cheek remarks about the politician.

too bad

- worthy of sorrow or regret

It is too bad that the university decided to close the bookstore last year.

too big for one's boots

- to feel more important than one really is

My friend is too big for his boots and thinks that he is very important.

too big for one's britches

- to feel more important than one really is

Our new boss is too big for his britches. He needs to change his behavior.

too clever by half

- to be very confident of your own intelligence but in a way that irritates other people

My friend is too clever by half. He thinks that he knows everything which is very annoying.

too close for comfort

- to be dangerously close

The edge of the road was too close for comfort so I moved my car away from it.

too good to be true

- to be almost unbelievable

The offer was too good to be true and I did not believe that it was possible.

too many irons in the fire

- to have too many things that you are trying to do

My friend has too many irons in the fire at the moment and has no time for other things.

too much of a good thing

- to be more of a good thing than is good or useful

The new company policy is too much of a good thing and they may change it.

too rich for (someone's) blood

- to be too expensive for someone's budget

The piano was too rich for our blood so we did not buy it.

toot one's own horn

- to boast or praise oneself

My friend is always tooting his own horn when he thinks that he has done something well.

tooth and nail

- fiercely, as hard as possible

The man decided to fight tooth and nail to transfer to another department of the company.

top dog

- the most important person in an organization

My uncle is the top dog in his company.

top-drawer

- to be of the best or most important kind

When my friend buys a new car he always buys a top-drawer model.

top-notch

- to be excellent, to be the best

They had a top-notch cook at the restaurant but he quit last month.

top (someone or something)

- to do or be better than someone or something

The young woman topped everyone in her class with her excellent science project.

top (something) off or top off (something)

- to add to the difficulty of a situation

I lost my car keys and to top it off I also lost my wallet.

top (something) off (with something)

- to end or terminate something with something else

The conference was topped off by a large dinner on the final day.

topsy-turvy

- to be upside down, to be in disarray

My apartment was topsy-turvy so I stayed home to clean it up.

torn between (two things)

- to be troubled by a choice or dilemma

I was torn between going to the library or going to a movie.

toss a salad

- to mix the ingredients of a salad with dressing

My friend asked me to toss the salad when we were making dinner.

toss off (an answer) or toss (an answer) off

- to make or say something easily without trying or thinking hard

The boy was able to easily toss off the answer to the question that the teacher asked him.

toss off (something) or toss (something) off

- to drink something rapidly

We tossed off a couple of drinks before we went home for the evening.

toss off (something) or toss (something) off

- to throw something off of oneself or something

I tossed off my jacket before I got into the car.

toss one's cookies

- to vomit

I tossed my cookies after eating the bad food at the restaurant.

toss one's hat into the ring

- to announce that one is running for an elected office

My friend tossed his hat into the ring and will try and become the school president.

toss (someone) out of (somewhere)

- to force someone to leave somewhere, to dismiss someone

The boys were tossed out of the restaurant for their bad behavior.

touch Idioms

touch a sore spot/point

- to mention a sensitive matter that will upset someone

I touched a sore spot when I began to talk about my friend's problems at work.

touch and go

- uncertain, in a dangerous situation

It was touch and go whether the girl was going to survive after the car accident.

touch base with (someone)

- to talk to someone, to meet someone briefly

I plan to touch base with my cousin before I go to the wedding next week.

touch off (someone) or touch (someone) off

- to make someone very angry

I touched off my friend when I said something that she did not like.

touch off (something) or touch (something) off

- to cause something to fire or explode by lighting the fuse

The fire at the oil refinery touched off an explosion that destroyed many tanks.

touch off (something) or touch (something) off

- to start something

The arrest of the labor leader touched off a riot among the workers.

touch on/upon (something)

- to speak or write briefly about something

The news article touched on the legal problems of the company.

touch up (something) or touch (something) up

- to paint over small imperfections of something

I asked the repair shop to touch up several places on my car where the paint was scratched.

touch up (something) or touch (something) up

- to improve something with small additions or changes

My essay will be finished after I touch up some of the weak spots.

touched (in the head)

- crazy

The woman is touched in the head and it is difficult to know what she will do next.

touched by (someone or something)

- to be emotionally affected or moved by someone or something

Everybody in the movie theater was touched by the performance of the dying actress.

a tough act to follow

- a good performance that is very difficult to follow

The first singer was a tough act to follow and the other singers in the contest were nervous.

a tough break

- an unlucky event, a misfortune

The singer received a tough break when he became sick immediately before the music contest.

tough it out

- to endure a difficult situation

I would like to quit my job but for now I plan to tough it out.

tough row to hoe

- a difficult task to undertake

Learning written Chinese was a tough row to hoe for the university students.

tourist trap

- a place that is overpriced and which attracts tourists

My friend thinks that Hawaii is a tourist trap and he does not want to go there for his holiday.

a tower of strength

- a person who provides strong and reliable support

The man has been a tower of strength to his sister since her husband died.

town and gown

- the two distinct communities of a university town - the town is the inhabitants of the town and the gown is the university community

The relations between town and gown in the small university town were terrible.

toy with (someone)

- to tease someone

The woman in the bank was toying with me when she began to ask me many questions.

toy with (something)

- to play or fiddle with something

I spent the morning toying with the broken radio and trying to repair it.

track (someone or something) down or track down (someone or something)

- to search for someone or something

I have been trying to track down an old Beatles album for many months.

trade in (something) or trade (something) in

- to exchange something old or used for something new

My friend traded in his old car for a new one.

trade on (something)

- to use a fact or a situation to one's advantage

The woman trades on her beauty and never works very hard.

train one's sights on (something)

- to have something as a goal, to direct something or oneself toward a goal

The young man is training his sights on joining the top team in the city.

travel light

- to travel with very little luggage

We always travel light when we go on a holiday.

travesty of justice

- an act of the legal system that is an insult to the system of justice

The court trial was a travesty of justice and nobody was happy with the results.

tread on (someone's) toes

- to do something that offends someone

I do not want to tread on my supervisor's toes because she is the most powerful person in this company.

treat (someone)

- to pay for someone else

My friend treated me to a dinner at a nice restaurant.

treat (someone) with kid gloves

- to treat someone very gently and carefully because you do not want to upset him or her

I treat my friend with kid gloves because she is very sensitive.

trial and error

- a way of solving a problem by trying different possible solutions until you find one that works

We worked by trial and error until we found a solution to the parking problems at our apartment building.

trial balloon

- an announcement or experiment with the purpose of finding out what people think about an idea or product

We sent up a trial balloon to see who would support our plan for the new product.

trials and tribulations

- problems and tests of one's courage and perseverance

My aunt has gone through many trials and tribulations in her life.

tricks of the trade

- a smart or quick or skillful way of doing something

The man knows many tricks of the trade in the publishing business.

trick (someone) into (doing something)

- to fool someone, to cheat someone

The salesman tricked the customer into buying something that he did not need.

tried-and-true

- tested by time and proven to be sound

I know a tried-and-true method to remove stains from a carpet.

trigger off (something) or trigger (something) off

- to cause something

The fire triggered off an explosion in the building.

trim the fat

- to make reductions in a company or organization in order to save money

The company is trying hard to trim the fat in its operations.

trip the light fantastic

- to go dancing

"It's Friday night so let's go downtown and trip the light fantastic."

trip up

- to make a mistake

The teacher tripped up over the correct pronunciation of the man's name.

trip up (someone) or trip (someone) up

- to cause someone to fail, to cause someone to make a mistake

The news reporter tripped up the politician with his difficult question.

trot (something) out or trot out (something)

- to mention something without giving it much thought

When I talk with my friend she often trots out some of our previous problems.

trouble one's head about (someone or something)

- to worry about someone or something

I am not going to trouble my head about my sister's visit next week.

trouble oneself about (someone or something)

- to worry about someone or something

I wish that my mother would not trouble herself about my problems at work.

trouble (someone) for (something)

- to ask someone to give or lend you something

I do not like to trouble the manager for her time but sometimes I must.

trouble (someone) to (do something)

- to ask someone to do something

I had to trouble my neighbor to look after my dog again last week.

trouble (someone) with (something)

- to bother someone with something

I never like to trouble my teacher with my simple questions.

true to form

- exactly as expected, following the usual pattern

True to form, our teacher refused to accept our papers late.

true to one's word

- keeping one's promise

My friend was true to his word and was waiting for me exactly at the time that we had agreed upon.

trump card

- something that is kept back to be used to win success if other things do not work

The man's trump card was his knowledge of the sales figures that nobody else knew.

trump up (something) or trump (something) up

- to make something up, to invent false charges

The man was arrested on trumped up charges for selling illegal software.

truth will out

- eventually the truth will become known

I know that eventually the truth will out and we will know exactly what happened at the meeting.

try Idioms

try for (something)

- to attempt to win something, to try to get something

The man plans to try for a new job in his company.

try on (something) or try (something) on

- to put clothes on to see how they fit and look

"You should try on that jacket before you buy it."

try one's hand at (something)

- to make an (inexperienced) attempt at something

I have decided to try my hand at sailing this summer.

try one's luck at (something)

- to try to do something (where success depends on luck)

I will try my luck at buying a lottery ticket although I usually never win.

try (out) one's wings

- to try to do something that one has recently become qualified to do

I am planning to try out my wings with my roller blades on Saturday.

try out (something) or try (something) out

- to test something

We were not permitted to try out the computer before we bought it.

try out for (something)

- to attempt to join or take part in a team or a play etc.

My friend has decided to try out for the football team this summer.

try (someone's) patience

- to do something annoying that may cause someone to lose patience

The constant complaints of the customers are beginning to try the clerk's patience.

try (something) out on (someone) or try out (something) on (someone)

- to test something on someone

I plan to try out the new recipe on my friends.

tuck into (something)

- to eat something with hunger and enjoyment

I tucked into the meal as soon as I sat down at the table.

tug-of-war

- a game in which two teams pull on opposite ends of a rope and try to pull the other team over a line marked on the ground

The children played tug-of-war at the summer camp.

tug-of-war

- a situation in which two sides try to defeat each other, a struggle over something

The two countries are involved in a tug-of-war over the disputed territory.

tune in (a radio)

- to adjust a radio or television to pick up a certain station or signal

We were able to tune in to the basketball game while driving to work this morning.

tune in to (something)

- to get in touch with something important like one's own feelings etc.

The woman works hard to tune in to her feelings.

tune out (someone or something) or tune (someone or something) out

- to ignore someone or something

I usually tune out my friend when he talks too much.

tune up (a musical instrument) or tune (a musical instrument) up

- to adjust a musical instrument to the right sound

The orchestra tuned up their instruments before the performance.

tune up (an engine) or tune (an engine) up

- to adjust a car engine so that it will run properly

We took our car to the garage to tune it up before we went on our holiday.

turn Idioms

turn a blind eye to (something)

- to ignore something troublesome and pretend not to see it

Our teacher usually turns a blind eye to the fact that the student often comes to school a few minutes late.

turn a deaf ear to (someone or something)

- to pretend not to hear someone or something, to refuse to hear someone or something

The company turned a deaf ear to the demands for more vacation time by the employees.

turn a profit

- to make a profit

The supermarket has been turning a profit since it opened.

turn around

- to move or face in the opposite direction

The man turned around to look at the person behind him.

turn down (someone or something) or turn (someone or something) down

- to refuse to accept someone or something, to reject someone or something

The union turned down the offer of more money from the company.

turn down (something) or turn (something) down

- to reduce the loudness or brightness or force of something

I talked to my neighbor and asked him to turn down his stereo.

turn in

- to go to bed

We decided to turn in early last night.

turn in (someone) or turn (someone) in

- to inform on someone, to report someone for doing something wrong or illegal

The department store turned in the shoplifter to the police.

turn in (something) or turn (something) in

- to give something to someone, to hand something to someone

I turned in the wallet that I found to the police.

turn into (something)

- to change into something, to become something

The boy turned into a very fine young man.

The rain caused the dirt to turn into mud.

turn of the century

- the end of one century and the beginning of another

There were many large celebrations at the turn of the century.

turn off (someone) or turn (someone) off

- to disgust or irritate or repel someone

The woman's constant complaining turns me off.

turn off (something) or turn (something) off

- to shut off something, to stop something

"Please turn off the lights before you go out."

turn off (somewhere)

- to leave a road or path by turning right or left onto another road or path

When we arrived at the small store we turned off onto the small road.

turn on a dime

- to turn quickly or in a very tight turn

The new truck is able to turn on a dime.

turn on a dime

- to change one's plans or orientation

I did not take the job in the city because my life cannot turn on a dime.

turn on one's heel

- to turn around suddenly

The letter carrier turned on his heel when he saw the large dog.

turn on (someone)

- to suddenly become hostile to someone

My coworker used to be my friend but he suddenly turned on me last summer.

turn on (something)

- to open or start something, to let water or electricity flow

"Please turn on the radio so we can hear the evening news."

turn one's back on (someone)

- to refuse to help someone who is in trouble or is in need

The girl turned her back on her friend when her friend asked for help.

turn one's stomach

- to make one feel sick

The moving car turned my stomach.

turn out

- to be shown to be something, to prove to be true

It turned out that more people came to the party than we expected.

turn out

- to become or result

The cake turned out well.

The boy turned out well when he was an adult.

turn out

- to see or do something

Over 50,000 people turned out for the concert.

turn out (a light)

- to make a light go out

I always turn out the light if I do not need it.

turn out all right

- to end satisfactorily

Everything at the party turned out all right.

turn out fine

- to end satisfactorily

We thought that the weather would be terrible but it turned out fine.

turn out good

- to end satisfactorily

The cake turned out good. It was delicious.

turn out (someone) or turn (someone) out

- to make someone leave or go away

The man decided to turn his son out of the house when he refused to get a job.

turn out (something) or turn (something) out

- to turn something inside out, to empty something

The man turned out his pockets when he was looking for his car keys.

turn out (something) or turn (something) out

- to make or produce a product or something

The car company turns out 8,000 cars every week.

turn over

- to roll over

The boat turned over during the storm.

turn over

- to sell

We were able to turn over most of our stock of fans during the summer.

turn over

- to start (used for a motor)

It was very cold and the motor would not turn over.

turn over a new leaf

- to make a fresh start

I will turn over a new leaf and begin to practice the piano every day.

turn over (an engine)

- to start an engine or motor

It was very cold in the morning so the car engine would not turn over easily.

turn over in one's grave

- to be so angry that one does not rest quietly in one's grave

My grandmother would turn over in her grave if she knew that I was not working.

turn over (something) to (someone) or turn (something) over to (someone)

- to give something to someone for his or her use or care

I turned over my apartment keys to the landlord when I went away for a month.

turn (someone) on or turn on (someone)

- to excite a person, an idea or person or something begins to interest someone

The idea of going to Spain for the summer turns my friend on.

turn (something) on its ear

- to change some activity in a surprising and exciting way

The new manager turned the office on its ear when he began to work in our department.

turn (something) to good account

- to make good use of a situation or experience

We were able to turn our experience with the income tax office to good account when we began to look at our business practices.

turn (something) to one's advantage

- to make an advantage for oneself out of something

The man was able to turn his previous job experience to his advantage in his new job.

turn tail

- to run away from trouble or danger

The young boys turned tail when the farmer began to chase them from the field.

turn the clock back

- to return to an earlier period

The politician wanted to turn the clock back to an earlier time but everyone knew it was impossible.

turn the heat up on (someone)

- to increase the pressure on someone to do something

The police are turning the heat up on the members of the criminal gang.

turn the other cheek

- to let someone do something to you and not try to get revenge or become angry

The man decided to turn the other cheek when someone tried to fight with him in the restaurant.

turn the tables on (someone)

- to reverse the situation for someone

The opposing team was able to turn the tables and win the game.

turn the tide

- to change what looks like defeat into victory

At the beginning of the game we were losing badly but we turned the tide and won the game.

turn the trick

- to bring about the result that one wants, to succeed in what one plans to do

"That will turn the trick," I said as my friend found the correct tool to fix the kitchen sink.

turn thumbs down on (someone or something)

- to disapprove or reject someone or something, to say no to someone or something

My supervisor turned thumbs down on my desire to have a more flexible schedule.

turn to (someone or something)

- to go to someone or something for help

We turned to my wife's parents for advice about buying a house.

turn up

- to appear suddenly

The girls turned up when the party was almost over.

turn up

- to be found, to be discovered

My wallet turned up in my jacket exactly where I had left it.

turn up one's nose at (something)

- to refuse something because it is not good enough

My friend turned up his nose at the job offer in another department of his company.

twiddle one's thumbs

- to not be busy, to not be working

We twiddled our thumbs all morning and did not get any work done.

twist (someone's) arm

- to force or threaten someone to make them do something

My friend did not have to twist my arm to get me to go to the movie. I wanted to go anyway.

twist (someone) around one's (little) finger

- to have complete control over someone and be able to make them do what you want

The woman is able to twist her supervisor around her little finger. She gets whatever she wants at work.

twist (someone's) words around

- to restate someone's words inaccurately when quoting him or her

The supervisor twisted my words around when he repeated my complaint to the manager.

two bits

- twenty-five cents, a quarter of a dollar

I bought several used books for two bits each.

two bricks shy of a load

- someone who is not very smart or clever

The young man is two bricks shy of a load and is very difficult to talk to.

two by two

- one person beside or next to another person

The children walked into the classroom two by two.

two cents

- something not important, something very small

Although my friend's stereo works well I would not give him two cents for it.

two cents worth

- an opinion (that is not asked for)

My friend is always talking and I never have a chance to put in my two cents worth.

two-faced

- disloyal, untrustworthy

I think that our supervisor is two-faced and cannot be trusted.

two of a kind

- people or things of the same type, similar in character or attitude etc.

The young girls are two of a kind and they do almost everything together.

two strikes against (someone)

- to do two things that are wrong or bad and have only one more thing to do to cause you serious trouble (from baseball where a batter is finished after three strikes)

The young boy already had two strikes against him when he went to hear the judge's decision about his crime.

two-time (someone)

- to cheat or betray one's spouse or partner by dating someone else

The woman in the movie was two-timing her husband.

U

ugly duckling

- an ugly or plain child who grows up to be attractive

The girl was an ugly duckling when she was a child but now she is very beautiful.

unaccustomed to (someone or something)

- not used to someone or something

The man was unaccustomed to waking up early in the morning.

under Idioms

under a cloud

- depressed, sad

The woman has been under a cloud of depression since her cat died.

under a cloud (of suspicion)

- not trusted, suspected of doing something wrong

The politician is under a cloud of suspicion over the possibility of taking bribes.

under arrest

- arrested by the police before being charged with a crime

The three men were under arrest for robbing a bank.

under certain circumstances

- depending on or influenced by specific circumstances

Under certain circumstances the children can practice in the indoor stadium.

under certain conditions

- depending on or influenced by specific conditions

The mountain road is closed under certain conditions.

under (close) scrutiny

- being watched or examined closely

The business owner was under scrutiny after the accounting scandal.

The results of the election are under close scrutiny.

under construction

- being built or repaired

The hotel was still under construction, two years after it began.

under control

- not out of control, manageable

The fire was under control after the fire department arrived.

under cover

- hidden, concealed

The police officer was under cover during the robbery.

under fire

- being shot at or attacked, under (verbal) attack

The soldiers were under fire.

The owner of the company is under fire for not paying his employees a fair salary.

under oath

- having taken a formal oath (solemn promise)

The man was under oath when he spoke before the judge.

under one's belt

- in one's experience or memory or possession

When my friend has more experience as a cook under his belt he will begin to look for a job.

under one's belt

- in one's stomach

After I had a big breakfast under my belt I was ready for work.

under one's breath

- in a whisper, with a low voice

The man was talking under his breath in the movie theater and somebody complained.

under one's nose

- within sight of someone, easily seen or found

My father found his driver's license right under his nose where he had left it.

under one's own steam

- by one's own efforts, without help

The man was able to go home under his own steam even though he was feeling very sick.

under one's thumb

- obedient to someone, controlled by someone

The man is only an assistant salesman but he has his boss under his thumb.

under one's wing

- under the care or protection of (someone)

Our supervisor took the new employee under his wing to help him in the new job.

under orders

- caused by law or rules to follow a certain course of action

The soldier said that he was under orders to shoot the rifle.

under pressure

- experiencing something that causes stress or anxiety

The boy's father is always under pressure at work.

under the circumstances

- because of the circumstances

The girl was very sick and under the circumstances did not have to take the exam.

under the counter

- secretly bought or sold

The new drug is being sold under the counter although the government has not approved it.

under the hammer

- for sale at an auction

The painting went under the hammer and it sold for a very high price.

under the influence of (someone or something)

- experiencing the effects of alcohol or drugs or a controlling power or person

The driver was under the influence of alcohol when he hit the young child.

The woman is under the influence of her boss.

under the sun

- anywhere on earth, everywhere

We looked for my wallet everywhere under the sun.

under the table

- in secret and usually illegal

The businessman paid some money under the table in order to get his product imported into the country.

under the weather

- feeling ill (but not seriously ill)

I am feeling under the weather so I am going to bed early tonight.

under the wire

- just barely in time

We sent in our payment for the school fees just under the wire.

under wraps

- not allowed to be seen until the right time, in secrecy

The new car was still under wraps when the car show started.

unearthly hour

- absurdly early or inconvenient

We got up at an unearthly hour this morning so we could go camping.

unfamiliar territory

- an area of knowledge unknown to the speaker

Trying to pilot an airplane was unfamiliar territory for the flight attendant.

unknown quantity

- a person or thing which nobody knows much about

The new mayor is an unknown quantity and nobody knows what to expect.

until all hours (of the day or night)

- until very late

We stayed up until all hours playing cards.

until hell freezes over

- forever

My friend said that he would not talk to his girlfriend again until hell freezes over.

until the cows come home

- until very late

It is my birthday today and I plan to party until the cows come home tonight.

up Idioms

up a blind alley

- on a route that leads nowhere, at a dead end

The police were up a blind alley in their search for evidence of the crime.

up against (someone or something)

- having trouble with someone or something

The student came up against many problems when he went to university.

up against (something)

- close to something

The ladder was standing up against the tree in the yard.

up and about

- healthy and moving around, not sick in bed

My uncle has been up and about for a couple of days since he left the hospital.

up and around

- out of bed and moving around, moving from one place to another

I was up and around before 6:00 AM this morning.

up and at 'em

- active and busy, up and at them

We will be up and at 'em very early tomorrow morning.

up and away

- up into the air and into flight

My parents got on the airplane and were quickly up and away.

up-and-coming

- new

The woman is an up-and-coming singer.

up for (something)

- to be enthusiastic about something

The entire school was up for the final football game of the season.

up for grabs

- available for anyone

The new championship of the city is up for grabs.

up front

- honest, correct

The man was very up front when giving me the information about the new office.

up in arms

- equipped with guns or weapons and ready to fight

The villagers were up in arms and trying to fight against the government.

up in arms

- very angry

The teachers were up in arms about the proposal to change their contract.

up in the air (about something)

- not settled, undecided

Whether or not I will be able to go to London is still up in the air.

up in years

- old, elderly

Although my grandparents are up in years they still have much energy.

up one's alley

- something one is good at or enjoys

Computer programming is right up his alley and he is very good at it.

up one's sleeve

- kept secretly for the right time or for a time that it is needed

My friend has something up his sleeve and will be able to find a job when he needs one.

up the creek

- in trouble

The woman is up the creek now that she has lost her passport.

up the creek with no paddle

- in trouble and unable to do anything about it

I think that we are up the creek with no paddle now that our car has no gasoline.

up the river with no paddle

- in trouble and unable to do anything about it

We were up the river with no paddle when we ran out of money on our vacation.

up to (a certain amount or number)

- until, as far as a certain amount or number, approaching a certain amount or number

There were probably up to thirty people at the meeting.

up to (a certain time)

- until, as far as a certain time, approaching a certain time

Up to last week I had never been inside a bowling alley.

up to a point

- partly, to some extent

I like my neighbor but only up to a point.

up-to-date

- modern, the latest standards of fashion

The kitchen in our apartment is not up-to-date at all.

up to here with (someone or something)

- sick of some continual bad or irritating behavior

I have had it up to here with his coming late to work.

up to it

- capable or fit for something

If he is up to it we can let him drive the truck to the new office.

up to no good

- doing something bad

The boys were up to no good after school.

up to one's chin

- very busy with something, deeply involved in something

The mayor has been up to his chin in the project to build a new convention center.

up to one's ears in work

- have a lot of work to do

I would like to go with you but I am up to my ears in work at the moment.

up to par

- meeting normal standards, equal to the usual level or quality

The man's work was not up to par and he was asked to leave his job.

up to scratch

- meeting normal standards, equal to the usual level or quality

The carpenter's job was not up to scratch so we fired him.

up to snuff

- meeting normal standards, equal to the usual level or quality

When I get my computer skills up to snuff I will look for a job to use them.

up to (someone) to decide (something)

- to be responsible to choose or decide something

It is up to the manager to decide when the meeting will start.

up to (someone) to do (something)

- to be responsible to do something

It is up to the manager to clean the apartment lobby.

up to (something)

- to be occupied in or planning some activity that is often bad

I do not know what the boy was up to last night but it was probably something bad.

up to (somewhere)

- as far as, as deep or as high as

The water in the swimming pool came up to my waist.

up to the job

- capable or fit for something

If the new boy is up to the job we will let him do more.

up to the mark

- meeting normal standards, equal to the usual level or quality

The work was not up to the mark and the company would not pay for it.

up-to-the-minute

- the very latest or most recent

We always try to get an up-to-the-minute weather report before we go skiing.

up until

- until

I was in the library up until midnight last night.

upon one's head

- to be one's own responsibility

The responsibility for the event was put upon my head.

upper crust

- rich and famous people, the highest class of people

The private club was full of the upper crust of the city.

upper hand

- a controlling power, an advantage

The union members have the upper hand in their negotiations with the company.

ups and downs

- good fortune and bad fortune, good times and bad times, difficulties

My cousin is having a few ups and downs but generally he is doing well.

upset the applecart

- to ruin or spoil a plan or idea

"Try not to upset the applecart as we have spent a lot of time working on this project."

upshot of (something)

- the result or outcome of something

The upshot of the meeting was that we would no longer continue to keep the store open.

upside down

- with the upper side turned toward the lower side

The boat was upside down in the water.

uptight

- to be worried or irritated or anxious

My sister is very uptight because of her exams.

use Idioms

use every trick in the book

- to use every method possible

The apartment manager used every trick in the book to force the young family to leave.

use one's head/bean/noodle/noggin

- to think carefully about something

"You should use your head a little more and try not to make the same mistake again."

use some elbow grease

- to use some effort

We used a lot of elbow grease to clean the oven.

use (someone or something) as an excuse

- to blame someone or something for something

My friend used his busy schedule as an excuse not to help us.

use strong language

- to use abusive or forceful language

The teacher used very strong language to make the children behave.

use up

- to use something until nothing is left, to spend or consume something completely

I used up all of the paper in the copy machine this morning.

used to

- formerly did something, had the habit of doing something

We used to live in a house but now we live in an apartment.

used to (something)

- to be accustomed to something

My friend is not used to living in such a big city.

V**vanish into thin air**

- to disappear without leaving a trace

The university student vanished into thin air and was never seen again.

variety is the spice of life

- life is made more interesting by doing new or different things

My grandmother believes that variety is the spice of life and is always starting new projects.

vent one's spleen

- to get rid of one's angry feelings

I was able to vent my spleen at the manager of our apartment for the problems that she was causing.

verge on (something)

- to come close or approach something

The accident verged on becoming a major disaster.

very last

- the end of something

We were able to buy the very last tickets to the concert.

very thing

- the exact thing that is required

The new sofa was the very thing that we needed to make our house comfortable.

very well

- agreed, all right

"Very well, if you want me to go I will go with you."

vicious circle

- an unbroken sequence of cause and effect with bad results

The man had fallen into a vicious circle of drinking too much and then losing his job and then drinking even more.

vim and vigor

- energy and enthusiasm

Our great aunt is always full of vim and vigor when we see her.

vote down (something) or vote (something) down

- to defeat something in a vote

The proposal to extend the opening hours of nightclubs was voted down in the election.

vote of confidence

- a vote to see if a person or political party still has the majority's support

The government received a vote of confidence when everyone supported their new proposal.

vote of thanks

- a speech expressing appreciation and thanks to a speaker or organizer

The speaker received a vote of thanks from the audience.

vote with one's feet

- to show that you do not like something by leaving

Many of the citizens voted with their feet and began to move to another city.

W**wade into (something)**

- to attack something, to join in something

The football player waded into the fight to help his teammates.

wait-and-see attitude

- an uncertain attitude where you wait and see what will happen

We decided to take a wait-and-see attitude regarding what our new boss was going to do.

wait for the other shoe to drop

- to wait for something bad to happen, to wait for something to happen after already knowing that something is going to happen

Our company announced that many people would lose their jobs. We are waiting for the other shoe to drop in order to learn more details of this announcement.

wait on (someone)

- to serve someone in a store or restaurant

We waited a long time but finally the waitress came to wait on us.

wait on (someone) hand and foot

- to serve someone in every possible way, to do everything for someone

The man always waits on his wife hand and foot.

wait tables

- to serve food (in a restaurant etc.)

My friend spent the summer waiting tables at the resort.

wait up (for someone)

- to not go to bed until someone arrives or something happens

The woman always waits up for her daughter when she comes home late at night.

wait with bated breath

- to feel excited or anxious while waiting

I waited with bated breath for the results of my exams.

waiting in the wings

- ready to do something such as take over someone's job

The vice-president of the company was waiting in the wings to help the president.

wake the dead

- to be very loud and be able to wake even those who have died

Our neighbors told us that our stereo was so loud that it would wake the dead.

wake up

- to arise from sleep, to awaken

I usually wake up early in the morning.

walk Idioms**walk a tightrope**

- to be in a situation where you must be very cautious

The Prime Minister is walking a tightrope regarding the international trade deal.

walk all over (an opponent)

- to win a game easily

We walked all over the other team at the soccer tournament.

walk all over (someone)

- to treat someone badly

My coworker tried to walk all over me when I began working but he soon stopped.

walk arm-in-arm (with someone)

- to walk with one's arms linked with someone else

The two girls walked arm-in-arm down the street.

walk away with (something)

- to take something and go away with it, to steal something

Somebody walked away with the computer from the library last night.

walk hand-in-hand (with someone)

- to walk while holding hands with someone

The couple walked hand-to-hand down the street.

walk of life

- occupation, social rank

People from every walk of life came to the concert in the park.

walk off with (something)

- to take something and go away with it, to steal something

I walked off with the wrong backpack by mistake.

walk on air

- to feel happy and excited

The girl has been walking on air since she passed her exams.

walk on eggshells/eggs

- to be very cautious and careful around someone so that he or she does not become angry

I always walk on eggshells when I meet my neighbor.

walk out

- to go on strike

Most of the workers at the factory decided to walk out on strike this morning.

walk out of (something)

- to leave suddenly

Three people walked out of the meeting yesterday.

walk the floor

- to walk back and forth across the floor

The man spent the night walking the floor in the hospital while waiting for his wife to have a baby.

walk the plank

- to be forced to resign from a job

The vice-president was forced to walk the plank when the new president joined the company.

walk the plank

- to be forced by pirates to walk a long plank from the ship out over the water to your death

The pirates captured the small ship and forced the captain to walk the plank.

walk up to (someone or something)

- to approach someone or something

The man walked up to the policeman and asked him a question.

walking papers

- a statement saying that one is fired from his or her job

My friend was given his walking papers from his company last week.

waltz off with (something)

- to take something, to get or win something easily

My favorite team waltzed off with the championship last night.

want for nothing

- to have everything that one needs or wishes

My sister and her husband both have good jobs and they want for nothing.

warm one's heart

- to make one feel warm or excited

The sight of the small boy helping the old woman warmed the heart of the people on the street.

warm the bench

- to sit on a bench and not play during a game

The young player spent most of the game warming the bench.

warm the cockles of one's heart

- to make someone feel warm and happy

The care and attention of the nurse when I was sick warmed the cockles of my heart.

warm up

- to get ready for a game or other event with exercise or practice

We spent two hours warming up for the game on Saturday.

warm up to (someone or something)

- to become friendly or interested (in someone or something)

The woman finally warmed up to the idea of going to Italy for a holiday.

warts and all

- including one's bad points

The man likes to be able to relax, warts and all, with his friends.

wash-and-wear

- clothing that you can wash and it does not need to be ironed before you wear it

My uncle always likes to buy wash-and-wear clothes.

wash one's hands of (someone or something)

- to abandon someone or something, to refuse responsibility for someone or something

The manager washed his hands of the problem after the others refused to deal with it.

wash (someone's) dirty linen in public

- to talk about someone's private or embarrassing matters in public

The man began to wash his friend's dirty linen in public.

washed up

- to be no longer successful or needed

The boxer was washed up and had to retire last year.

waste one's breath

- to speak pointlessly about something without the desired results

My boss is very stubborn and you are wasting your breath to argue with him.

Watch it!

- be careful (usually used as a command)

"Watch it! That truck is going very fast and may hit you."

watch one's P's and Q's

- to be well-behaved, to be careful

The boy had to watch his P's and Q's after he caused many problems at school.

watch one's step

- to act cautiously so that you don't make a mistake or anger someone

You should watch your step when you complain to the manager.

watch out for (someone or something)

- to watch over and care for someone, to watch for the arrival or approach of someone

Please watch out for my friend at the airport.

I watched out for my friend's son while my friend was away.

watch over (someone or something)

- to monitor or guard (someone or something)

I watched over the class while the teacher was at a meeting.

watch (someone or something) like a hawk

- to watch someone or something very carefully

The mother always watches her daughter like a hawk when they go to the park.

water down (something) or water (something) down

- to make something weak, to dilute something

The new policy is a watered down version of the old one.

water under the bridge

- something that happened in the past and cannot be changed

It was terrible that your house was robbed but it is water under the bridge now and you must move forward.

wave the flag

- to show a strong sense of nationalism or patriotism

The man loves to wave the flag and loves his country very much.

wax and wane

- to increase and decrease (like the moon)

The boy's interest in soccer is always waxing and waning.

way the wind blows

- the direction that something may go, what may happen

We will have to see which way the wind blows to see if we can go to London or not.

ways and means

- the raising of money to pay for something

The woman does not have the ways and means to give her children a good education.

wear Idioms

wear and tear

- damage that is the result of ordinary use

We put a lot of wear and tear on our car during our long holiday.

wear away

- to disappear little by little by use or time or weather

The paint on the table is wearing away.

wear down (something) or wear (something) down

- to make something become less useful or smaller or weaker because of wear or age

Little by little, the water wore down the beach at the edge of the river.

wear down (someone) or wear (someone) down

- to exhaust or tire someone out

My boss was worn down from the many questions in the meeting.

wear more than one hat

- to have more than one set of responsibilities

Our teacher wears more than one hat. She is the head of the school board as well as the coach of the swim team.

wear off

- to disappear little by little by use or time or weather

The name on the front of my credit card wore off from using it too much.

wear on (someone)

- to anger or annoy (someone)

His constant complaining is beginning to wear on me.

wear one's heart on one's sleeve

- to show one's feelings openly

The man was wearing his heart on his sleeve after the meeting with his boss.

wear out one's welcome

- to visit someone too long or come back too often so that you are not welcome anymore

My friend has worn out his welcome at our house because he always visits without calling first.

wear out (something) or wear (something) out

- to use or wear something until it becomes old and in bad condition

My shoes wore out during my trip to Paris.

wear sackcloth and ashes

- to behave in a way that shows that you are very sorry for something that you have done wrong - in ancient Biblical times people wore very uncomfortable sackcloth (cloth for sacks) for mourning and also to repent for something that they did wrong

The politician was forced to wear sackcloth and ashes as an apology for his wrongdoing.

wear several hats

- to have more than one set of responsibilities

Our teacher wears several hats. She is the head of the school board as well as the coach of the swim team.

wear the pants in a family

- to be the boss in a family

The woman is very strong and is the one who wears the pants in her family.

wear thin

- to become thin from use or the passing of time

The silver dollar began to wear thin after it was in use for many years.

wear thin

- to grow less interesting or believable

The woman's excuses began to wear thin after she kept using them again and again.

weasel out of (something)

- to decide not to do something in a sneaky way

My friend weaseled out of helping us clean up the yard.

weather permitting

- if the weather allows

Weather permitting, we will go to the lake on Saturday.

weave in and out (of something)

- to move or drive or walk in and out of something such as traffic

The man was driving very fast and was weaving in and out of the traffic.

wee hours (of the night/morning)

- the hours immediately after midnight

I read my book into the wee hours of the morning.

weed out (someone or something) or weed (someone or something) out

- to remove something that is unwanted, to get rid of something

I spent the morning weeding out the clothes that I do not wear anymore.

week in and week out

- week after week

Week in and week out the man takes his children to the lake to swim.

weigh down on (someone)

- to worry or depress someone

The man's problems at work seem to be weighing down on him.

weigh on/upon (someone)

- to be a weight or pressure on someone or something, to worry or upset someone

The pressure of exams has begun to weigh upon my sister.

weigh on/upon (someone's) mind

- to be a weight or pressure on someone or something, to worry or upset someone

My mother's illness is weighing on my mind.

weigh one's words

- to be careful of what one says

You should weigh your words carefully before you tell your boss what you want.

welcome (someone) with open arms

- to greet someone eagerly

We welcomed my relatives with open arms when they arrived.

welcome to (do something)

- to be free to do something

The apartment manager said that we were welcome to park our car anywhere.

well and good

- good, satisfactory

It is well and good that the employee will go and talk to his supervisor about the problem.

well-heeled

- rich

The man seems well-heeled and is always wearing expensive clothes and driving a nice car.

well-off

- wealthy

The girl's parents are well-off and do not need to worry about money during their retirement.

well-to-do

- having lots of money

The boy comes from a rather well-to-do family.

well up in years

- old

My father is well up in years but he is very healthy.

wet behind the ears

- inexperienced, immature

The new employee is wet behind the ears and does not know much about his job yet.

wet blanket

- a person who discourages other people from having fun

The boy is a wet blanket so we never invite him to our parties.

wet one's whistle

- to have a drink (especially alcohol)

They decided to stop on their way home from work to wet their whistle.

what Idioms

what about

- about or concerned about something

I know that my friend wants to borrow my tent but what about my sleeping bag.

What are you driving at?

- What do you mean?

I really do not understand what my friend is driving at.

What can I say?

- I am at a loss for words.

"What can I say? I made a mistake and I'm sorry."

What have you been up to?

- What have you been doing?

"What have you been up to?," I asked my sister when I saw her.

what it takes

- the ability to do a job, courage

My friend has what it takes to be a success at his job.

what makes (someone) tick

- what motivates or makes someone behave in a certain way

I do not know what makes that woman tick. She is very strange.

What one doesn't know won't hurt one.

- what you do not know will not worry or harm you

What my aunt doesn't know won't hurt her and we don't need to tell her about the broken dish.

what with

- because, as a result of

We wanted to go away for a holiday but what with moving to a new house we are too busy to go anywhere.

What's cooking?

- What is happening?, What is wrong?

"What's cooking," he asked his friend.

What's done is done.

- something is final and in the past

What's done is done. Now that the man has quit his job he must find a new one.

What's keeping you?

- What is taking you so long?

"What's keeping you?," the man asked his wife as he waited to go out.

What's new?

- What have you been doing?

"What's new?," I asked my friend after I had not seen him for three months.

What's the big idea?

- Why did you do that?, What are you doing?

"What's the big idea? Why are you using my bicycle?"

What's up?

- What is happening?, What is wrong?

"What's up," the man said as he entered the room.

what's (up) with (someone)

- what is happening or wrong with someone, how is everything with someone

"What's up with the new supervisor? He seems very angry this morning."

what's what

- things that appear similar but are different

It is hard to tell what's what at a sale of old furniture.

Whatever will be, will be.

- things will just happen and there is little that we can do about it

Whatever will be, will be and it is not possible to predict what will happen in the future.

wheel and deal

- to take part in political or business dealing

There was a lot of wheeling and dealing going on before they built the new convention center.

when Idioms**when hell freezes over**

- never

The man said that he would only come to the office party when hell freezes over.

when it comes right down to it

- when one really thinks about something

When it comes right down to it, I do not think that I should quit my job.

when it comes to (something)

- speaking about something

When it comes to sports, my friend is a very knowledgeable person.

when least expected

- when one does not expect something

When least expected our secretary always asks for time off from work.

when one is good and ready

- when one is completely ready

I decided not to go and see the supervisor until I was good and ready.

when push comes to shove

- when a situation becomes more difficult

When push comes to shove my friend's daughter is always able to find a job.

when the cat's away, the mice will play

- when you are not watching someone they may get into trouble, when a person with authority is absent then those below him or her can do whatever they want

When the cat's away, the mice will play and when the teacher left the classroom the students began to play.

when the chips are down

- at the final and critical moment, when things really become difficult

When the chips are down the man will always come and help his friends.

when the going gets tough (the tough get going)

- when things become difficult strong people begin to work harder

When the going gets tough our teacher is always there to support and help us.

when the time is ripe

- at exactly the right time

When the time is ripe we will sell our house.

where one is coming from

- one's point of view

I do not understand where the man is coming from when he begins to complain about the noise.

whet someone's appetite

- to interest someone in something and make them want to have or know more about it

The presentation by the mountain climber whet my appetite for more outdoor activities.

while away the time

- to spend or pass time pleasantly

We spent the afternoon whiling away the time by the river.

whip (someone or something) into shape

- to transform or change something that is failing into something that works effectively

The coach worked hard to whip the team into shape after a very bad season.

whip up (something) or whip (something) up

- to make something active, to stir something to action

The union leader whipped up the crowd with his speech.

whip up (something) or whip (something) up

- to make or do something quickly or easily

It was very late when we got home so I whipped up something to eat quickly.

whistle a different tune

- to change one's attitude, to contradict previous ideas

The man is whistling a different tune now that he has been promoted and has more responsibility at his job.

whistle in the dark

- to try to stay brave and forget one's fear

The man felt very frightened and began to whistle in the dark. This helped to calm him down.

white elephant

- a useless possession that is a nuisance and often very expensive to keep

They are having a white elephant sale at the school next week.

white elephant

- a waste of money

The new airport was a white elephant which nobody wanted to use.

white lie

- a harmless lie often told to be polite

I told the woman a white lie when I said that I would be too busy to meet her.

white sale

- selling towels or linens etc. at reduced prices

We went to the white sale at the department store last week.

whole ball of wax

- the whole thing or the whole matter

I want to finish our redecorating project and be finished with the whole ball of wax.

whole new ball game

- a new set of circumstances

The situation became a whole new ball game when the owners decided to sell the team.

whole shooting match

- the whole thing or the whole matter

I wanted to get rid of my videos and DVDs so I gave the whole shooting match to my friend.

whole show

- everything

Our new boss always tries to run the whole show.

whoop it up

- to enjoy oneself in a lively and noisy manner

The fans were whooping it up after they won the basketball game.

wide of the mark

- far from the target, incorrect

The manager's ideas for the company are wide of the mark and different from what everybody expected.

wild about (someone or something)

- to be enthusiastic about someone or something

The boys were wild about the new movie.

wild card

- an extra team chosen to enter a competition without taking part in the regular qualifying method

Our team was able to enter the competition because we were the wild card winner.

wild goose chase

- an absurd or hopeless search

The man led the police on a wild goose chase when he ran away from them.

wildcat strike

- a strike not ordered by a labor union but done without planning by a group of workers

There was a wildcat strike at the factory last night.

will not hear of (something)

- will not allow or consider something

My aunt said that she will not hear of us staying at a hotel when we come to visit her.

willpower

- strength of mind

The man has very strong willpower and was able to quit smoking easily.

win by a nose

- to win by a small amount

The candidate won by a nose so they had to count the votes again.

win out (over someone or something)

- to be victorious or successful after hard work or difficulty

We finally won out over our boss. He agreed to listen to our complaints.

win over (someone) or win (someone) over

- to gain the support and sympathy of someone

We finally won the apartment manager over and she will let us have a pet in our apartment.

wind down

- to decrease or diminish

At the end of the summer, the beach shops began to wind down their business.

wind things up

- to end, to finish, to settle

"Let's wind things up now and then we can go home."

wind up (doing something)

- to finally do something

We will probably wind up shopping tomorrow.

wind up (something) or wind (something) up

- to end something, to finish something, to settle something

It was time to wind up our project and go home.

wind up (something) or wind (something) up

- to tighten the spring of a machine or clock to make it work

Every night before he goes to bed my grandfather winds up his alarm clock.

wind up (somewhere)

- to finally be somewhere

I will probably wind up at my friend's house this evening.

wind up (with something)

- to finally get or have something

Last week I wound up with a bad cold.

wing it

- to act without preparation

My friend was not prepared for the examination so he had to wing it.

wink at (something)

- to allow and pretend not to know about something (e.g. a law or rule being broken)

The school librarian sometimes winks at the rule about borrowing a maximum of three books.

winning streak

- a series of several wins one after the other

Our baseball team has been on a winning streak for several weeks now.

wipe off (something) or wipe (something) off

- to remove something by wiping or rubbing it, to clean the surface of something

We always wipe off the table before we have dinner.

wipe out (something) or wipe (something) out

- to kill or destroy something completely

The city spends a lot of money every year trying to wipe out the rats near the river.

wipe-out

- a disaster, a calamity

My exams were a wipe-out. I think that I failed all of them.

wipe (someone's) slate clean

- to erase someone's (bad) record

The man had a bad performance record at work but he was able to wipe his slate clean and start over.

wipe the floor with (someone)

- to physically beat someone

The ex-boxer wiped the floor with the man who insulted him.

wise guy

- a person who acts as if he were smarter than other people

The boy always acts like a wise guy when he is in a group.

wise up to (someone or something)

- to begin to understand the truth about someone or something

The man finally wised up to the fact that he was never going to get a promotion in his company.

wisecrack

- a sarcastic or witty remark

The woman made a wisecrack during the speech which caused the audience to start laughing.

wishful thinking

- believing that something is true because you wish it to be true

It is wishful thinking that I can finish my work early.

wishy-washy

- to be unable to decide, to have no definite opinion

The man is very wishy-washy and can never make up his mind about what he wants to do.

with Idioms

with a heavy heart

- sadly

It was with a heavy heart that we said goodbye to our elderly neighbor.

with a vengeance

- with determination and eagerness

The basketball team played with a vengeance and won the game easily.

with a view to (something)

- with the aim or purpose of doing something

The new transportation policy was made with a view to decreasing car traffic.

with all one's heart and soul

- very sincerely, totally

The woman believed with all her heart and soul that she would recover from her illness.

with all the fixings

- with all the extra things that come with some meals

We ordered the meal with all the fixings.

with an eye/view to (doing something)

- with the intention of doing something

We bought the truck with an eye to using it for our home business.

with both hands tied behind one's back

- easily

My friend can fix bicycles with both hands tied behind his back.

with each passing day

- after each day

With each passing day the price of gasoline was increasing.

with ease

- without effort

We were able to find a parking spot with ease.

with everything (on it)

- a sandwich or hamburger ordered with everything available on it

We ordered a hamburger with everything on it.

with flying colors

- with great or total success

I passed my final exams with flying colors.

with hat in hand

- with humility (usually used when you ask for something from someone who is more powerful than you)

The man came to his boss with hat in hand to ask for a raise in pay.

with hindsight

- the understanding of events after they have happened

With hindsight it was very easy to understand what had happened before the accident.

with impunity

- without risk of punishment

The young boy could do anything that he wanted with impunity.

with it

- alert and knowledgeable

My grandmother was not really with it before she passed away.

with no strings attached

- with no obligations attached

I was given the car to use with no strings attached.

with one hand tied behind one's back

- easily

I can fix the computer problems with one hand tied behind my back.

with one's tail between one's legs

- appearing frightened or cowardly (like a frightened dog)

The man left the store with his tail between his legs when someone saw him trying to steal something.

with open arms

- warmly or eagerly

My aunt and uncle were at the airport to greet us with open arms.

with regard to (something)

- concerning/regarding something, referring to something

With regard to my previous job experience, I decided not to talk about it today.

with relish

- with pleasure or enjoyment

I began my new job and did my work with relish.

with respect to (something)

- referring to something, concerning something

I do not know what the company will do with respect to the old computer system.

with the best of them

- as well as anyone

The boy can play soccer with the best of them when he makes the effort.

within a stone's throw of something

- very close (to something)

We could not find the house even though we were within a stone's throw of it.

within an inch of one's life

- almost dead

The elderly man was beaten to within an inch of his life.

within calling distance

- close enough to hear someone call

We were within calling distance of the men in the boat.

within reason

- being sensible or reasonable about something

Within reason, you should be able to take some time off from work when your mother is sick.

without batting an eye

- casually, without showing any response

The criminal kept changing his story without batting an eye.

without fail

- absolutely, for certain

The postman comes about noon everyday without fail.

without further ado

- without further talk

Without further ado they ended the meeting.

without question

- absolutely, certainly

Without question, the boy was the fastest runner on the team.

without rhyme or reason

- without purpose or reason

Without rhyme or reason the two men started arguing in the bus.

(at one's) wit's end

- to not know what to do

I was at my wit's end trying to decide what to wear to the party.

wolf in sheep's clothing

- a person who pretends to be good but is not

The man is a wolf in sheep's clothing. You should be very careful when you deal with him.

word for word

- in exactly the same words

I described word for word what happened before the accident.

word of mouth

- orally from one person to another

I heard about the new restaurant by word of mouth.

word to the wise

- a good piece of advice

I gave my friend a word to the wise before he started on his trip.

words to that effect

- something similar to what was just said

The apartment manager said that we could not bring a bicycle into the apartment lobby or words to that effect.

work Idioms**work graveyard shift**

- to work throughout the night

My friend is working graveyard shift this month.

work in (something) or work (something) in

- to rub something in, to move over something using some pressure

We spent a long time trying to work the softening cream into the leather.

work in (someone or something)

- to insert someone or something (into a schedule)

My doctor was very busy but she was able to work me into her schedule tomorrow.

I will try to work in a meeting with the new manager tomorrow.

work into (something)

- to force something into something (usually with some difficulty)

I was able to work my foot into my boot but it was still very tight.

walk arm-in-arm (with someone)

- to walk with one's arms linked with someone else

The two girls walked arm-in-arm down the street.

work like a dog

- to work very hard

The boy worked like a dog on his school project.

work odd jobs

- to work by doing jobs that are unrelated and require no special skills

The boy has been working odd jobs since he left high school.

work off (something) or work (something) off

- to make something go away (especially by working or exercise)

I was able to work off much weight and am now feeling better.

work on (someone)

- to have an effect on someone, to try to influence someone

I am working on my boss to give me some time off this summer.

work one's fingers to the bone

- to work very hard

The woman is working her fingers to the bone raising her three children.

work out

- to exercise

The man spends most weekends working out at the health club.

work out (for the best)

- to end successfully, to prove effective or satisfactory

I hope that everything will work out for my friend when she moves to London next week.

work out (something) or work (something) out

- to solve a problem

I could not work out the math problem on the final examination.

work out (something) or work (something) out

- to accomplish something, to arrange something

Recently, we worked out a system for calculating our expenses at work.

work over (someone) or work (someone) over

- to threaten or beat someone

The criminal gang worked over the storeowner in order to get some money from him.

work overtime

- to work beyond one's normal hours

I had to work overtime many days last month.

work up (someone) or work (someone) up

- to stir up someone, to excite someone

The speaker worked up the crowd with his passionate speech.

work up (something) or work (something) up

- to produce something

I like to work up a sweat when I exercise.

work up to (something)

- to advance to something, to rise to something

The man quickly worked up to sales manager in his company.

work wonders (with someone or something)

- to be very beneficial to someone or something

The vacation in Egypt worked wonders on the mental health of our boss.

worked up

- to feel excited, to be angry, to be worried

My friend is worked up because he was not invited to the party.

world is one's oyster

- everything is possible for someone

The world is the woman's oyster now that she has received her MBA from Harvard University.

worm one's way out of (something)

- to wiggle out of a problem or a responsibility

I was able to worm my way out of working late last night.

worse for wear

- not as good as new, worn out

I borrowed my friend's backpack for a month and it is now beginning to look the worse for wear.

(not) worth a cent

- not worth anything (used in the negative)

My old car broke down and is not worth a cent now.

worth its weight in gold

- to be very valuable

The advice of my supervisor is worth its weight in gold.

worth one's salt

- to be worth what one is paid

The man is worth his salt and is one of our best employees.

worth one's while

- to be worth one's time and trouble

It is not worth my while to go back and get my hat which I left at the restaurant.

It is worth your while to learn the piano.

worthy of the name

- to be good enough to enjoy a specific name

The restaurant is fantastic and worthy of the great chef's name.

would give one's right arm (for something)

- to be willing to give something valuable for something

I would give my right arm to meet my favorite musician.

would just as soon

- to prefer to do one thing rather than another

I would just as soon stay at home as go to a movie.

would rather

- prefer to

I would rather use my computer than watch television.

wouldn't touch (someone or something) with a ten-foot pole

- to not get involved with someone or something for any reason

I would not touch that used car salesman with a ten-foot pole.

wound up

- to be very excited, to be nervous or upset

I was wound up yesterday after work and I could not go to sleep easily.

wrap (oneself) up

- to put on warm clothes, to dress warmly

The woman wrapped herself up in her warm clothes and went outside.

wrap (someone) around one's finger

- to have complete control over someone and be able to make him or her do what you want

The woman has her boss wrapped around her finger and can do anything that she wants.

wrap up (something) or wrap (something) up

- to finish a task, to bring something to an end

We wrapped up the meeting before dinner and went home.

wrapped up in

- to be thinking about or interested in only one thing

My friend is wrapped up in his school project today.

wreak havoc on/with (something)

- to cause a lot of trouble or damage to something

The hurricane wreaked havoc on the small town.

write off (something) or write (something) off

- to remove an amount of money from a business record, to cancel a debt

The bank was forced to write off a very large loan.

write off (something) or write (something) off

- to accept a loss or trouble and not worry any more about it

The man decided to write off his bad experience at his old job.

write out (something) or write (something) out

- to write something on a piece of paper

I plan to write out the recipe that I saw on television.

write up (something) or write (something) up

- to write something, to describe something in writing (you usually write up something by using your thoughts or some notes that you have written)

After our trip to Russia, I spent a week writing up our story for a travel magazine.

wrong side of the tracks

- the poor side of town

The man married a girl from the wrong side of the tracks because he loved her.

X

X marks the spot

- this is the exact spot

We looked at the map and saw that X marked the spot where the accident had taken place.

Y

yakety-yak

- a lot of talk about little things

We spent the whole evening in a yakety-yak session at my friends.

year after year

- for many years, one year after another

We went to the lake year after year when I was a child.

year in and year out

- every year

Year in and year out the city had to spend money to fix the old stadium.

year round

- during the entire year

We usually spend the summer at a year-round vacation resort.

yellow-bellied

- extremely timid, cowardly

The man is a yellow-bellied person who is not good to have as a friend.

yellow journalism

- overly sensational newspaper writing

The newspaper story about the scandal was a good example of yellow journalism.

yellow streak

- cowardice in a person's character

The boy has a yellow streak and will not help defend his friends.

a yes-man

- a person who tries to be liked by agreeing with everything someone says (especially his or her boss)

He is a yes-man who will do anything that his boss asks him to do.

yield the right-of-way

- to give the right to turn or move to another vehicle

We were forced to yield the right-of-way to the other car at the intersection.

yoke around someone's neck

- a burden for someone

The complaints from the apartment manager were a yoke around our neck.

You bet!

- most certainly, without any doubt

"You bet I will be attending the conference next year."

You bet your boots!

- most certainly, without any doubt

"You bet your boots I am going to go."

You bet your life!

- most certainly, without any doubt

"You bet your life I will be attending the conference next year."

You can say that again!

- that's true, you're right (used to show strong agreement with what another person has said)

"You can say that again," I answered when the woman mentioned how hot it was outside.

You can't please everyone.

- it is not possible to make everyone happy

You can't please everyone and somebody in the class was always unhappy with what the teacher chose to do.

You can't take it with you.

- you should use your money and enjoy life now because when you die it is no good

You can't take it with you and you should enjoy your money and life while you have the chance.

You can't teach an old dog new tricks.

- people become used to their way of doing things and you can't get them to change

You can't teach an old dog new tricks and my grandfather will never miss drinking a glass of milk before he goes to bed.

You don't say!

- used to show surprise at what is said

"You don't say," the man said when he heard about the accident on the highway.

You got me there.

- I don't know the answer to your question.

"You got me there. What do you think the answer is?"

You said it!

- that's true, you're right (used to show strong agreement with what another person has said)

a) "This meeting is wasting everybody's time."

b) "You said it!"

You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours.

- if you will do me a favor then I will do you a favor

"You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours," is a common expression in the construction industry.

You're telling me!

- something is so clear that it does not need to be said

a) "This restaurant is very expensive and the food is not good."

b) "You're telling me."

Your guess is as good as mine.

- your guess or answer is as likely to be correct as mine

"Your guess is as good as mine," I answered when my friend asked me how to use the video player.

Your secret is safe with me.

- I won't tell anyone your secret

"Your secret is safe with me," I told my friend when he told me his problem.

yours truly

- oneself, I, me

I told my friend that if he wanted to borrow some money he could talk to yours truly.

yours truly

- a polite phrase to end a letter

I usually end my letters with "Yours sincerely" but sometimes I use "Yours truly."

You tell`em!

- used to agree with or encourage someone in what they are saying

"You tell`em," I yelled to the politician who was making the speech.

Z

zero hour

- the exact time when an attack or other military action will start

The air force planes waited until zero hour in order to begin their bombing mission.

zero hour

- the time when an important decision or event is supposed to occur

We waited until zero hour and the time when the new computer system was supposed to begin operating.

zero in on

- to adjust a gun so that it will hit a target, to aim at something

The soldiers zeroed in on the target and began to fire their guns.

zero in on

- to give one's full attention to something

We zeroed in on the problem of what to do with the extra space in our office.

zero-sum game

- a situation where if one person or organization wins or gains something then the other person or organization must lose

It is a zero-sum game with the manager. Someone has to win or lose.

zonk out

- to fall asleep very quickly

When I got home last night I immediately zonked out.

zoom in on (someone or something)

- to use a zoom lens to get a closer view of someone or something when taking a photograph

The cameraman zoomed in on the players on the field.

100 Most Frequent Idioms

about to (do something)

- to be on the point of doing something

I was about to leave when the phone rang.

according to (someone or something)

- as said or told by someone, in agreement with something, in the order of something, in proportion to something

According to our teacher, there will be no class next week.

We did everything according to the terms of our agreement.

account for (something)

- to provide an explanation or answer for something

The bad weather accounts for the fact that few people came to the meeting.

after all

- considering the fact that something happened, something that is usually assumed

"You don't need to phone him. After all, he never phones you."

all of a sudden

- suddenly, without advance warning

All of a sudden it became cloudy and began to rain.

as a matter of fact

- actually

"As a matter of fact, we have been to the history museum many times."

as far as

- to the extent or degree of something

As far as I know the movie will start in a few minutes.

as for

- with regard to, concerning

"As for me, I think that I will return home now."

as if

- in the same way that something would be, that

The drink tastes as if it were made with orange juice.

It seemed as if the whole town came to the concert.

as long as

- provided that, on condition that

"As long as you promise to be careful you can borrow my car."

as soon as

- just after something, when

I phoned my friend as soon as I finished dinner.

as to

- with regard to, according to

"As to your question, I will answer it tomorrow."

The players were put into groups as to their ability.

as well

- in addition, also, too

I plan to take a computer course this summer as well.

as well as (someone or something)

- in addition to someone or something

"Please bring your swimming suit as well as your towel."

back and forth

- backwards and forwards, first one way and then the other way

The argument went back and forth before the judge made a decision.

better off

- to be in a better situation than before

My friend would be better off if he sold his old car and bought a new one.

break down (something)

- to divide something into parts, to separate something into simpler substances

We tried to break down the problem for further study.

The sugar began to break down soon after it was swallowed.

break up

- to separate, to divide into groups or pieces, to put an end to something

Nobody wanted to break up their groups.

We usually break up into small groups during our class.

by the way

- incidentally

"By the way, could you please bring your laptop computer tomorrow."

carry out (something)

- to put something into action, to accomplish something, to do something

The scientist wanted to carry out several experiments before discussing the new medicine.

come on!

- please, hurry, go faster

"Come on, I only have a few minutes before I must go."

"Come on, stop doing that."

come up

- to happen unexpectedly

I will not be able to go to the party if something else comes up.

come up with (something)

- to produce or find a thought/idea/answer

I tried to come up with a name for the new magazine.

deal with (something)

- to be concerned with something, to take action about something

We will deal with the boxes tomorrow.

end up (doing something or going somewhere)

- to do something that one had not planned to do, to go somewhere one had not planned to go

We ended up going to a restaurant after the movie last night.

figure out (someone or something)

- to try to understand someone or something, to solve something

I finally figured out how to use the new DVD player.

fill in (something)

- to write words in blank spaces

"Please fill in this form and give it to the receptionist."

find out (something)

- to learn or discover something

My mother is angry at me because she found out that I had quit my French class.

first of all

- the very first thing

First of all we prepared the garden and then we planted the seeds.

for good

- permanently

The city will close the public swimming pool for good next week.

for sure

- without doubt, certainly, surely

"I will go to the movie with you for sure next week."

get back to (something)

- to return to something

I was happy to get back to my work after my holiday.

get into (something)

- to become interested or involved in something

I do not want to get into an argument with my friend.

We will get into the details of the plan tomorrow.

get into (somewhere)

- to enter somewhere

My friend wants to get into a good university.

I bumped my head as I was getting into the car.

get out of (somewhere)

- to leave somewhere, to escape from somewhere

I want to hurry and get out of my house.

get rid of (something)

- to give or throw something away, to sell or destroy something, to make a cold or fever disappear

I bought a new television set so I want to get rid of the old one.

get through (something)

- to complete something, to finish something

My friend is having trouble getting through her final exams.

I have much reading that I must get through before tomorrow.

go ahead

- to begin to do something

"Let's go ahead and start now. We can't wait any longer."

go on

- to continue

The game will probably go on for an hour after we leave.

go over (something)

- to examine or review something

The accountant will go over the books tomorrow.

We plan to go over that question tomorrow.

go through (something)

- to discuss something, to look at something, to do something

The teacher decided to go through the exercise before the test.

go with (something)

- to choose one thing rather than another

We decided to go with the small rental car rather than the large one.

hang out (somewhere/with someone)

- to spend one's time with no great purpose, to spend leisure time with friends

Recently my friend has been hanging out with a group of people who are not a good influence on him.

have (something) to do with (something)

- to be about something, to be on the subject of something, to be related to something

"The book has something to do with cooking but I am not sure if you will like it."

That problem has nothing to do with me.

hold on

- to wait a minute, to stop, to wait and not hang up the phone

"Please hold on for a minute while I lock the window."

in a way

- to a certain extent, a little, somewhat

In a way I want to go to the new restaurant but in a way I don't really care.

in case

- if, if something should happen

I will take my umbrella in case it rains.

in common

- shared together or equally, in use or ownership by all

I had nothing in common with the other members of the class.

in detail

- giving all the details, item by item

The saleswoman explained about the new product in detail.

in effect

- for practical purposes, basically

The man's silence was in effect a way of disagreeing with the other people in the meeting.

in fact

- actually, the truth is

The man has been to China before. In fact he has been there three times.

in favor of (someone or something)

- to approve or support someone or something

Everybody is in favor of the new police chief.

My company is not in favor of changing our holiday schedule.

in general

- in most situations or circumstances

In general, most of the people in our apartment are happy with the new manager.

in order to

- for the purpose of

They have decided to close down the school for the summer in order to do some major repairs.

in other words

- in a different (usually more direct) way

"In other words, if you do not finish the assignment by Wednesday you will not pass the course."

in place

- in the proper place or location

Everything in the room was in place when we arrived for the meeting.

in some ways

- in some unspecified way or manner, by some unspecified means

In some ways I know what my friend means but in some ways I do not.

in terms of (something)

- with regard to something

In terms of our agreement with the other company we were not allowed to sell the products online.

in time

- early enough

I did not come home in time to meet my cousin.

keep (someone or something) in mind

- to remember and think about someone or something

I told my co-workers to keep the new starting time for work in mind.

kind of

- somewhat, more or less, moderately

I was kind of tired when I arrived home last night.

look for (something)

- to try to find something, to hunt/search for something

My friend has been looking for her credit card all morning but she can't find it.

look up (something)

- to search for something in a dictionary or other book

I will look up my friend's name in the telephone book.

I looked up the word in the dictionary.

make a difference

- to cause a change in a situation

It does not make a difference whether our boss comes to the meeting or not.

make sense

- to seem reasonable

His new proposal really does make sense.

make sure

- to make certain, to establish something without a doubt

I want to make sure that my friend is going to meet me tomorrow.

more or less

- somewhat, to some extent

I more or less have decided to study business next year.

no matter

- regardless

No matter how hard that I try, my piano teacher is never satisfied.

not at all

- certainly not

I am not at all happy with my new computer.

of course

- certainly, definitely, naturally

"Of course you can use my car if you want to."

on the other hand

- however, in contrast, looking at the opposite side of a matter

He is very intelligent but on the other hand he is very lazy and always gets low marks at school.

on time

- at the scheduled time, exactly at the correct time, punctually

Our train arrived exactly on time.

once again

- again, one more time, once more

I tried once again to phone my boss at his home .

open to (something)

- to be agreeable to learn or hear about new ideas or suggestions

Most members of the class were open to the teacher's ideas.

pick up (something)

- to get or receive something

I will pick up my dry cleaning tomorrow.

I picked up a copy of the newspaper at the station.

point out (someone or something)

- to explain or call attention to someone or something

My teacher was very kind when she pointed out the mistakes that I had made.

put out (something)

- to produce or make something (a product/brochure/report/CD/movie/paper)

The company puts out a newsletter every month for the employees.

regardless of (something)

- without considering or thinking about something, without regard to something

Regardless of the weather we are going to go fishing tomorrow morning.

right away

- immediately

"I forgot to bring my book but I will go home and get it right away."

rule out (someone or something)

- to decide against or eliminate someone or something

The police ruled out the man as a possible bank robber.

We decided to rule out Monday as the day to have our meeting.

run into (something - a fact/trouble/problems/difficulty)

- to experience something, to encounter something

The mechanic ran into trouble when he was fixing my car.

I ran into some interesting facts when I was researching my essay.

set up (something)

- to establish something, to provide the money for something

The newspaper company provided the money to set up the new travel magazine.

The company set up a unique situation to test the new product.

show up

- to appear, to arrive, to be present

"What time did your friend show up for the party?"

so far

- until now

So far no one has entered the speech contest at the television station.

so to speak

- as one might or could say, this is one way to say something

We had a good time at the restaurant, so to speak, although the service was not very good.

sort of (something)

- to be almost something, to be similar to something, to be not quite something

"Did you finish cleaning the kitchen?"

"Sort of, but not really."

stick with (something)

- to continue doing something, to not quit something

My brother has been able to stick with his trumpet lessons since he was a child.

take advantage of (someone or something)

- to use someone or something for one's own benefit

We took advantage of the beautiful weather and went to the beach.

take care of (someone or something)

- to look after or give attention to someone or something

You should take care of your health or you will become sick.

take out (something)

- to remove something from somewhere, to extract something

The teacher told us to take out our books.

I took out some onions from the refrigerator.

take over (something)

- to take control of something, to take command of something

The large company wants to take over some of the small companies in our area.

take place

- to happen, to occur

The soccer game took place on the coldest day of the year.

to the extent that

- to the degree that, in so far as

I plan to provide information about the new company policy to the extent that I am familiar with it.

turn in (something)

- to give something to someone, to hand something to someone

I arrived at school early so that I could turn in my essay.

turn out

- to be found or known, to prove to be true

It turned out that more people came to the party than we expected.

up to

- until, as far as a certain point, approaching a certain point

Up to last week I had never been inside a bowling alley.

There were probably up to thirty people at the meeting.

up to (someone) to decide/do (something)

- to be responsible to choose or decide something

It is up to the company president to decide when the meeting will start.

used to

- accustomed to

My friend is not used to living in such a big city.

with respect to (something)

- referring to something, concerning something

I do not know what the company will do with respect to the old computer system.

work out (for the best)

- to end successfully

I hope that everything will work out for my friend when she moves to London next week.

How These Idioms Were Chosen

Which idioms to learn and which to teach is important for both students and teachers. While this decision can be made in a random manner, a better way is to examine a specific body of English material and decide which idioms are the most frequently found. This type of collection of material is called a corpus (the plural for corpus is corpora).

There are many corpora available. These include the Collins Cobuild Corpus in the United Kingdom and the Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English (MICASE) in the United States. The MICASE corpus is a collection of recorded speech from the University of Michigan in the United States. The material includes lectures, casual office discussions and study group sessions in various faculties of the university. They are taken from one particular style or purpose of naturally occurring English. Different idioms will be used in a conversation, a novel, a news report or a scientific paper. Any list of idioms will be different depending on the English corpus that is used to compile that list. However, most corpora contain idioms that are common to all corpora and any list that is used will be composed of idioms that are often found in much English language material.

The MICASE corpus is easily available to anyone with Internet access and it is the corpus which was used to produce this list of the 100 Most Frequently Used English Idioms. The idioms that occur in this list of frequently used idioms are the most frequent idioms that are found in an academic setting in the United States.

What is an idiom?

An idiom is a combination of words that has a meaning that is different from the meanings of the individual words themselves. It can have a literal meaning in one situation and a different idiomatic meaning in another situation. It is a phrase which does not always follow the normal rules of meaning and grammar.

To sit on the fence can literally mean that one is sitting on a fence.

I sat on the fence and watched the game.

However, the idiomatic meaning of to sit on the fence is that one is not making a clear choice regarding some issue.

The politician sat on the fence and would not give his opinion about the tax issue.

Many idioms are similar to expressions in other languages and can be easy for a learner to understand. Other idioms come from older phrases which have changed over time.

To hold one's horses means to stop and wait patiently for someone or something. It comes from a time when people rode horses and would have to hold their horses while waiting for someone or something.

"Hold your horses," I said when my friend started to leave the store.

Other idioms come from such things as sports that are common in the United Kingdom or the United States and may require some special cultural knowledge to easily understand them.

To cover all of one's bases means to thoroughly prepare for or deal with a situation. It comes from the American game of baseball where you must cover or protect the bases.

I tried to cover all of my bases when I went to the job interview.

Structure of Idioms

Most idioms are unique and fixed in their grammatical structure. The expression to sit on the fence cannot become to sit on a fence or to sit on the fences. However, there are many changes that can be made to an idiom.

Some of these changes result in a change in the grammatical structure that would generally be considered to be wrong.

To be broken literally means that something is broken.

The lamp is broken so I cannot easily read my book.

To be broke is grammatically incorrect but it has the idiomatic meaning of to have no money.

I am broke and I cannot go to a movie tonight.

There can also be changes in nouns, pronouns or in the verb tenses.

I sat on the fence and did not give my opinion.

Many people are sitting on the fence and do not want to give their opinion.

Adjectives and adverbs can also be added to an idiomatic phrase.

The politician has been sitting squarely in the middle of the fence since the election.

It is for these reasons that it is sometimes difficult to isolate the actual idiomatic expression and then find it in a dictionary of idioms.

What is a phrasal verb?

A phrasal verb is a verb which is a combination of a verb and an adverb, a verb and a preposition, and a verb with an adverb and a preposition. It can have a literal meaning that is easy to understand because the meaning is clear from the words that are used in the phrasal verb itself. It can also have an idiomatic meaning which cannot easily be understood by looking at the words themselves.

The following examples contain a literal meaning and an idiomatic meaning:

Verb and Adverb (run + around)

to run around (something) - to run in a circle around something

The dog ran around the fire hydrant.

to run around (somewhere) - to go to various places to do something

I spent the day running around downtown.

Verb and a Preposition (run + into)

to run into (someone or something) - to hit or crash into someone or something

The car ran into the truck on the busy street.

to run into (someone) - to meet someone by chance

I ran into my friend in a restaurant yesterday.

Verb and Adverb and Preposition (run + along/around + with)

to run along with (someone or something) - to run beside or at the same pace as someone or something

The dog ran along with the bicycle.

to run around with (someone) - to be friends and do things with someone or with a group

The boy is running around with a bad group of people.

Some idiomatic expressions are made with a phrasal verb plus some other words. These words are used in a fixed order to give an idiomatic meaning.

to run (verb) around (adverb) like a chicken with its head cut off - to run around with what seems to be no purpose

I ran around like a chicken with its head cut off as I tried to prepare for my holidays.

What is a proverb?

A proverb is a short saying or sentence that is generally known by many people. The saying usually contains words of wisdom, truth or morals that are based on common sense or practical experience. It is often a description of a basic rule of conduct that all people generally follow or should follow. Proverbs can be found in all languages.

money doesn't grow on trees - money is not easy to get and you must work hard for it
The girl's father often says that money doesn't grow on trees when she asks him for money.

the early bird catches the worm - arriving early gives one an advantage
My boss always comes to work early because he believes that the early bird catches the worm.

the pen is mightier than the sword - writing and ideas are more powerful than the use of force
The pen is mightier than the sword and a good idea or strong beliefs will defeat the strongest army.