

Idioms & Phrasal Verbs

Idioms & Phrasal Verbs

➤ Idioms

Letter A

A Bird In The Hand Is Worth Two In The Bush:	Having something that is certain is much better than taking a risk for more, because chances are you might lose everything.
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A Blessing In Disguise:	Something good that isn't recognized at first.
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A Chip On Your Shoulder:	Being upset for something that happened in the past.
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A Dime A Dozen:	Anything that is common and easy to get.
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A Drop in the Bucket:	A very small part of something big or whole.
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A House Divided Against Itself Cannot Stand:	Everyone involved must unify and function together or it will not work out.
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A Penny Saved Is A Penny Earned:	By not spending money, you are saving money (little by little).
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A Picture Paints a Thousand Words:	A visual presentation is far more descriptive than words.
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A Piece of Cake:	A task that can be accomplished very easily.
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A Taste Of Your	When you are mistreated the same
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Own Medicine:	way you mistreat others.
A Toss-Up	A result that is still unclear and can go either way
Actions Speak Louder Than Words	It's better to actually do something than just talk about it
Add Fuel To The Fire	Whenever something is done to make a bad situation even worse than it is
All In The Same Boat	When everyone is facing the same challenges
An Axe To Grind	To have a dispute with someone
Apple of My Eye	Someone who is cherished above all others
As High As A Kite	Anything that is high up in the sky
At The Drop Of A Hat	Willing to do something immediately

Letter B

Back Seat Driver	People who criticize from the sidelines, much like someone giving unwanted advice from the back seat of a vehicle to the driver
Back To Square One	Having to start all over again
Back To The Drawing Board	When an attempt fails and it's time to start all over

Barking Up The Wrong Tree	A mistake made in something you are trying to achieve
Beat A Dead Horse	To force an issue that has already ended
Beating Around The Bush	Avoiding the main topic. Not speaking directly about the issue
Bend Over Backwards	Do whatever it takes to help. Willing to do anything
Bite Off More Than You Can Chew	To take on a task that is way to big
Bite Your Tongue	To avoid talking
Blood Is Thicker Than Water	The family bond is closer than anything else

Letter C

Can't Cut The Mustard	Someone who isn't adequate enough to compete or participate
Chip on his Shoulder	Angry today about something that occurred in the past
Cock and Bull Story	An unbelievable tale
Come Hell Or High Water	Any difficult situation or obstacle

Cross Your Fingers	To hope that something happens the way you want it to
Cry Over Spilt Milk	When you complain about a loss from the past
Curiosity Killed The Cat	Being Inquisitive can lead you into a dangerous situation
Cut to the Chase	Leave out all the unnecessary details and just get to the point

Letter D

Dark Horse	One who was previously unknown and is now prominent
Devil's Advocate	Someone who takes a position for the sake of argument without believing in that particular side of the argument. It can also mean one who presents a counter argument for a position they do believe in, to another debater
Dog Days of Summer	The hottest days of the summer season
Don't count your chickens before they hatch	Don't rely on it until your sure of it
Don't Put All Your Eggs In One	Do not put all your resources in one possibility

Basket

Drive someone up the wall	To irritate and/or annoy very much
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Dry Run	Rehearsal
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Letter E

Ethnic Cleansing	Killing of a certain ethnic or religious group on a massive scale
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Every Cloud Has A Silver Lining	Be optimistic, even difficult times will lead to better days
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Everything But The Kitchen Sink	Almost everything and anything has been included
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Letter F

Field Day	An enjoyable day or circumstance.
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Finding Your Feet	To become more comfortable in whatever you are doing.
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Fixed In Your Ways	Not willing or wanting to change from your normal way of doing something.
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Flash In The Pan	Something that shows potential or looks promising in the beginning but fails to deliver anything in the end.
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Flesh and Blood	This idiom can mean living material of which people are made of, or it can refer to someone's family.
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From Rags To	To go from being very poor to being
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Riches very wealthy

Full Monty This idiom can mean either, "the whole thing" or "completely nude"

Letter G

Get Over It To move beyond something that is bothering you

Get Up On The Wrong Side Of The Bed Someone who is having a horrible day.

Get Your Walking Papers Get fired from a job

Give Him The Slip To get away from. To escape.

Go For Broke To gamble everything you have

Go The Extra Mile Going above and beyond whatever is required for the task at hand

Good Samaritan Someone who helps others when they are in need, with no discussion for compensation, and no thought of a reward

Letter H

Haste Makes Waste Quickly doing things results in a poor ending.

Hat Trick	When one player scores three goals in the same hockey game. This idiom can also mean three scores in any other sport, such as 3 homeruns, 3 touchdowns, 3 soccer goals, etc.
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Have an Axe to Grind	To have a dispute with someone.
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He Lost His Head	Angry and overcome by emotions.
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Head Over Heels	Very excited and/or joyful, especially when in love.
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Hit The Nail on the Head	Do something exactly right or say something exactly right.
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Hocus Pocus	In general, a term used in magic or trickery
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Hold Your Horses	Be patient
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Letter I

Icing On The Cake	When you already have it good and get something on top of what you already have
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Idle Hands Are The Devil's Tools	You are more likely to get in trouble if you have nothing to do
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In The Heat Of The Moment	Overwhelmed by what is happening in the moment
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In Your Face	An aggressive and bold confrontation
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It Takes Two To	A two person conflict where both
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Tango	people are at fault
It's A Small World	You frequently see the same people in different places

Letter J

Jaywalk	Crossing the street (from the middle) without using the crosswalk
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Letter K

Keep An Eye On Him	You should carefully watch him
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Keep body and soul together	To earn a sufficient amount of money in order to keep yourself alive
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Keep your chin up	To remain joyful in a tough situation
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Knee Jerk Reaction	A quick and automatic response
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Know the Ropes	To understand the details
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Letter L

Last but not least	An introduction phrase to let the audience know that the last person mentioned is no less important than those introduced before him/her
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Lend Me Your Ear	To politely ask for someone's full attention
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Let Bygones Be Bygones	To forget about a disagreement or argument
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Let Sleeping	To avoid restarting a conflict
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Dogs Lie

Let The Cat Out Of The Bag	To share a secret that wasn't supposed to be shared
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Level playing field	A fair competition where no side has an advantage
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Letter M

Make No Bones About	To state a fact so there are no doubts or objections
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Mumbo Jumbo	Nonsense or meaningless speech
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Mum's the word	To keep quiet. To say nothing
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Letter N

Never Bite The Hand That Feeds You	Don't hurt anyone that helps you
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New kid on the block	Someone new to the group or area
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No Dice	To not agree. To not accept a proposition
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Letter O

Off On The Wrong Foot	Getting a bad start on a relationship or task
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Off The Hook	No longer have to deal with a tough situation
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Off the Record	Something said in confidence that the
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	one speaking doesn't want attributed to him/her
On Pins And Needles	Anxious or nervous, especially in anticipation of something
On The Fence	Undecided
On The Same Page	When multiple people all agree on the same thing
Out Of The Blue	Something that suddenly and unexpectedly occurs
Over My Dead Body	When you absolutely will not allow something to happen
Letter P	
Pass The Buck	Avoid responsibility by giving it to someone else
Pick up your ears	To listen very carefully
Pig In A Poke	A deal that is made without first examining it
Practice Makes Perfect	By constantly practicing, you will become better
Pulling Your Leg	Tricking someone as a joke
Put a sock in it	To tell noisy person or a group to be quiet
Letter Q	
Queer the pitch	Destroy or ruin a plan

Letter R

Raining Cats and Dogs A very loud and noisy rain storm

Rise and Shine Time to get out of bed and get ready for work/school

Rome Was Not Built In One Day If you want something to be completely properly, then its going to take time

Rule Of Thumb A rough estimate

Run out of steam To be completely out of energy

Letter S

Saved By The Bell Saved at the last possible moment

Scapegoat Someone else who takes the blame

Scot-free To escape and not have to pay

Sixth Sense A paranormal sense that allows you to communicate with the dead

Smell A Rat To detect someone in the group is betraying the others

Smell Something Fishy Detecting that something isn't right and there might be a reason for it

Southpaw Someone who is left-handed

Start From Scratch To do it all over again from the beginning

Letter T

The Ball Is In Your Court	It is your decision this time
The Best Of Both Worlds	There are two choices and you have them both
The Last Straw	When one small burden after another creates an unbearable situation, the last straw is the last small burden that one can take
The Whole Nine Yards	Everything. All of it
Tie the knot	To get married
Till the cows come home	A long time
To Make A Long Story Short	Something someone would say during a long and boring story in order to keep his/her audience from losing attention. Usually the story isn't shortened
To Steal Someone's Thunder	To take the credit for something someone else did
Tongue-in-cheek	humor, not to be taken serious
Turn A Blind Eye	Refuse to acknowledge something you know is real or legit

Letter U

Under the weather	Feeling ill or sick
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Up a blind alley	Going down a course of action that leads to a bad outcome
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Letter V

Variety Is The Spice Of Life	The more experiences you try the more exciting life can be
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Letter W

Wag the Dog	A diversion away from something of greater importance
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Water Under The Bridge	Anything from the past that isn't significant or important anymore
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Wear Your Heart On Your Sleeve	To openly and freely express your emotions
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When It Rains, It Pours	Since it rarely rains, when it does it will be a huge storm
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When Pigs Fly	Something that will never ever happen
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Wine and Dine	When somebody is treated to an expensive meal
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Without A Doubt	For certain
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Letter X

X marks the spot	A phrase that is said when someone
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finds something he/she has been looking for

Letter Y

You Are What
You Eat

In order to stay healthy you must eat healthy foods

You Can't Judge
A Book By Its
Cover

Decisions shouldn't be made primarily on appearance

You Can't Take it
With You

Enjoy what you have and not what you don't have, since when you die you cannot take things (such as money) with you

Your Guess Is As
Good As Mine

I have no idea

Letter Z

Zero Tolerance

No crime or law breaking big or small will be overlooked.

➤ Phrasal Verbs

Phrasal Verb	Meaning	Example
Abide by	respect or obey. (the law, a decision, a rule)	If you want to stay at this school, you must abide by the rules.
Account for	explain, give a reason	I hope you can account for the money you spent!
Add up	make sense, seem reasonable	Her story just doesn't add up.
Advise against	recommend not doing something	The doctor advised him against carrying heavy loads.
Agree with	have the same opinion as somebody else.	I agree with you. I think she deserves the award too.
Aim at	point something in the direction of a target	The policeman aimed his gun at the hijacker.
Allow for	take into consideration, include in a	You'd better leave early to allow for traffic jams.

	calculation	
Appeal to	1. plead or make an earnest request 2. be attractive or interesting	1. The organizers appealed to the crowd to stay calm. 2. A trekking holiday doesn't appeal to me.
Apply for	make a formal request for something, (job, permit, loan etc.)	He applied for the job he saw advertised in the newspaper.
Avail (oneself) of	take advantage of something (an opportunity)	When the company is privatized, you should avail yourself of the opportunity and buy some shares.
Back away	move backwards, in fear or dislike	When he saw the dog, he backed away.
Back down	withdraw, concede defeat	Local authorities backed down on their plans to demolish the

building.

Back up

1. give support or encouragement
2. make a copy of (file, program, etc.)

1. If I tell the boss we've got too much work, will you back me up?

2. It is recommended to back up all files in a secure location.

Bail out

1. pay money to secure someone's release
2. rescue from financial difficulties

1. When he was arrested, his family refused to bail him out.

2. The government bailed out the bank.

Bank on

base your hopes on someone/something

Don't forget the date. I'm banking on your help.

Beef up

improve, make more substantial

He beefed up his presentation with diagrams and statistics.

Black out

faint, lose consciousness

When he fell off the horse he blacked

		out.
Block off	Separate using a barrier.	The area was blocked off during the demonstration.
Blow up	1. explode; 2. be destroyed by an explosion	1. The terrorists said the bomb would blow up at 9 o'clock. 2. The car blew up but luckily there was nobody in it.
Boil down to	be summarized as	The problem boils down to a lack of money.
Boot up	start a computer by loading an operating system or program.	Just give my a few minutes to boot up the computer.
Break away	escape from captivity	A few horses broke away from the paddock.
Break down	1. go out of order, cease to function 2. lose control of one's emotions	1. Nitish's car broke down so he had to take the bus. 2. The parents

		broke down when they heard the bad news.
Break into	enter by force	Burglars broke into the house around midnight.
Break out	start suddenly	Rioting broke out as a result of the strike.
Break out of	escape from a place by force	Three prisoners broke out of jail.
Break up	come to an end (marriage, relationship)	After her marriage broke up, Seema went to live in London.
Bring up	raise (a child)	She stopped working in order to bring up her children.
Brush up on	improve, refresh one's knowledge of something	Meena had to brush up on her English before going to America.
Bump into	meet by accident or unexpectedly	Padma bumped into her English teacher

at the supermarket.

Burn out

1. stop (something) working

1. The fuse has burnt out.

2. become exhausted from over-working

2. Tom will burn himself out if he doesn't slow down.

Call back

return a phone call

I'll call you back as soon as possible.

Call off

cancel

The meeting was called off because of the strike.

Call on/upon

formally invite or request

I now call upon the President to address the assembly.

Calm down

become more relaxed, less angry or upset

He was angry at first but he eventually calmed down.

Carry on

continue

He carried on gardening in spite of the rain.

Carry out

1. do something as specified (a plan, an

1. The plan was carried out to

	order, a threat) 2. perform or conduct (test, experiment)	perfection. 2. Tests are carried out to determine the efficiency of a new drug.
Carry over	postpone until later	As regards holidays, can you carry over any days from one year to the next?
Check in	register at a hotel or airport	For security reasons you have to check in two hours before your flight.
Check out	1. pay one's bill and leave (a hotel) 2. investigate	1. Is Mr. Kumar still at the hotel? No, he checked out this morning. 2. I don't know if the address is still valid. I'll check it out.
Clam up	refuse to speak	When the teacher arrived she clammed up.
Clamp	act strictly to	The government

down on	prevent something	has decided to clamp down on smoking in public places.
Close down	stop operating (company, restaurant, cinema).	
Come across	1. find by chance 2. appear, seem, make an impression	1. Veena came across some photographs of her grandparents in the store room. 2. The candidate came across as a dynamic person during the interview.
Come forward	present oneself	The police have asked any witnesses to come forward.
Come up against	be faced with or opposed by	The project came up against a lot of criticism.
Count on	rely or depend on	I'm counting on the

	(for help)	taxi driver to find the theatre.
Cross out	remove by drawing a line through	In some exercises, you are asked to cross out the incorrect word.
Cut down on	reduce in number or size	The doctor told him to cut down on cigarettes.
Cut out	1. remove using scissors 2. stop doing something	1. She cut out a picture in a magazine. 2. I'm going to cut out eating between meals.
Deal with	handle, take care of (problem, situation)	The manager is good at dealing with difficult customers.
Die down	calm down, become less strong	When the applause died down, she started to sing.
Do without	manage without	The shops are closed so we'll have to do without sugar.

Drag on	last longer than expected	We expected a short speech but it dragged on and on!
	write (contract, agreement, document)	An agreement was drawn up and signed by the two parties.
Dress up	1. wear elegant clothes 2. disguise oneself	1. Do people dress up to go to the opera in your country? 2. Children love to dress up at Halloween.
Drop in	visit, usually on the way somewhere	I sometimes drop in to see my grandparents on my way home from school.
Drop off	1. deliver someone or something 2. fall asleep	1. I'll drop you off at the bus stop if you like. 2. Granddad often

drops off in front of the TV.

Drop out

leave school without finishing

She decided to go to art school then dropped out after the first term.

Ease off

reduce, become less severe or slow down (pain, traffic, work)

After Christmas the workload generally eases off.

End in

finish in a certain way; result in

Their marriage ended in divorce.

End up

finally reach a state, place or action

If he continues his misconduct he'll end up in prison.

Even out

1. eliminate differences of opinion.
2. become level or regular

1. After a long discussion they managed to even out their differences.

2. The road was evened out to make it safer.

Fall through

fail; doesn't happen

Our planned boat trip fell through

because of the storm.

Figure out	understand, find the answer	I'm trying to figure out how to assemble the bookshelves.
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Fill out	complete (a form/an application)	Please fill out the enclosed form and return it as soon as possible.
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Find out	discover or obtain information	I'm going to call the cinema to find out what time the film starts.
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Focus on	concentrate something	on The advertising campaign will focus on the quality of the product.
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Figure out	understand; find a solution	We'll have to figure out a way to deliver the goods faster.
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Get along (with)	be on good terms; work well with	I get along (well) with my mother-in-law.
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Get at	imply	What exactly are you trying to get at?
Get away	escape	The robbers got away in a black car.
Get by	manage to cope or to survive	It's difficult to get by on a low salary.
Get in	enter	How did the thief get in?
Get into (+noun)	enter	How did the thief get into the house?
Get off	1. leave (bus, train, plane) 2. remove	1. You should get off the bus at the main market of the town. 2. She can't get the stain off her sweater.
Get on	board (bus, train, plane)	You can pay when you get on the bus.
Get on with (something)	continue to make progress	Be quiet and get on with your homework.

Get on (well) with (somebody)	have a good relationship with	I get on very well with my colleagues.
Get out	leave	How did he get out?
Get out of (+noun)	leave	How did he get out of the house?
Get out of	avoid doing something	Some husbands manage to get out of doing any housework.
Get over	recover from (illness, disappointment)	My grandmother had pneumonia but she got over it.
Get rid of	eliminate	It's difficult to get rid of old habits.
Get together	meet each other	Let's get together for lunch on day.
Get up	rise, leave bed	I usually get up at 7 o'clock.
Give up	stop something doing	Rajesh gave up smoking 5 years ago.
Go through	experience	Prashant went

through a lot of pain
after the accident.

Grow up	spend one's childhood; develop; become an adult	He grew up in a small village in the mountains.
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Hand in	submit (report, homework)	All application forms must be handed in before the end of the month.
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Hand out	distribute	Samples will be handed out at the end of the demonstration.
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Hang out	spend time in a particular place, or with a group of friends	Where does he hang out these days? Who does he hang out with?
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Hang up	end a phone conversation	"Don't hang up. I haven't finished yet."
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Hit at	aim a blow at	He hit at the wasp with the newspaper.
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Hit back	retaliate; reply to an	When he was
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	attack	attacked by the others, the boy hit back.
Hit on/upon	find unexpectedly or by inspiration	She hit upon an idea for her new collection.
Hold on	1. wait 2. grip tightly	1. "Hold on please. I'll put you through to Mr. Khanna" 2. She held on to the railing as she crossed the bridge.
Hurry up	be quick, act speedily	Hurry up! We'll miss the bus.
Iron out	resolve by discussion, eliminate differences	The meeting tomorrow will be an opportunity to iron out difficulties.
Join in	participate	She was too shy to join in the game.
Join up	1.engage in, become a member of 2. meet and unite with	1. Deven was in the Army and Shekher joined up as soon as he left school.

2. The two groups of tourists joined up at the hotel.

Jot down take quick notes

I jotted down the address while watching the programme on TV.

Keep on continue something doing

It told him to be quiet but he kept on making noise.

Keep up with stay at the same level as someone or something

Karan walks so fast it's difficult to keep up with him.

Kick off begin, start

The football match kicked off at 3 o'clock.

Leave out omit, not mention

The child's name was left out of the report.

Let down disappoint

You promised to come to the party, so don't let me down!

Look after take care of

A babysitter looks

after the children
when their parents
go out.

Look ahead think of the future

It's time to forget
the past and look
ahead.

**Look down
on** consider as inferior

He tends to look
down on anyone
who is not
successful.

Look on be a spectator at an
event

Billu didn't take part
in the fight. He just
looked on.

Look for try to find something

Seema went to the
shops to look for a
pair of shoes.

**Look
forward to** await or anticipate
with pleasure

I look forward to
seeing you soon.

Look up to admire

He was a wonderful
teacher and many
students looked up
to him.

Make fun of laugh at/
jokes about make

The old lady
dresses so

strangely that the kids make fun of her.

Make up	invent (excuse, story)	Some employees make up excuses when they arrive late for work.
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Mix up	mistake one thing or person for another	I don't know my neighbours' names yet. I keep mixing them up.
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Move in	arrive in a new home or office	You've bought a new house? When are you moving in?
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Move out	leave your home/office for another one.	My neighbour is leaving. He's moving out next Saturday.
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Nod off	fall asleep	My grandfather often nods off in front of the television.
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Note down	write something	I'll call the station and note down the
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		departure times.
Opt out	leave a system or decide not to participate	I enjoy tennis but I'm so busy I had to opt out of the tournament.
Own up	admit or confess something	The boy owned up. He said he kicked the ball through the window.
Pass away	die	The old lady passed away peacefully.
Pass out	faint	She passed out when she heard the bad news.
Pay back	reimburse	I'll lend you Rs. 20 provided you pay me back before the end of the week.
Put off	postpone, arrange a later date	The meeting was put off because of the strike.
Put on	turn on, switch on	Could you put on the light please?
Put out	extinguish	It took a long time

		to put out the fire.
Put up	accommodate, give somebody a bed	We can put you up if you'd like to come for a week-end.
Pick up	collect somebody	I'll pick you up at the station when you arrive.
Point out	indicate/direct attention to something	She pointed out the mistake.
Rely on	count on, depend on, trust	Don't worry. You can rely on me. I can keep a secret.
Rule out	eliminate	The police ruled out political motives.
Run away	escape from a place or suddenly leave	He ran away from home at the age of fourteen.
Run into	meet by accident or unexpectedly (also: bump into)	Sheetal ran into Meera at the shopping centre.
Run out of	have no more of something.	What a nuisance! We've run out of coffee.

Set off	start a journey	Early Saturday morning we set off for the ski slopes.
Set up	start a business	She set up her own company 10 years ago.
Shop around	compare prices	It's always wise to shop around before buying anything.
Show off	brag or want to be admired	There's Devesh showing off in his new sports car!
Show up	appear/arrive	We expected Deepak to come but he didn't show up.
Shut up (impolite)	be silent, stop talking	Oh shut up, you idiot!
Sit down	take a seat	Please come in and sit down.
Stand up	rise from a sitting position	The pupils stood up when the headmaster arrived.
Stick up for	defend	It's important to stick up for one's

principles.

Take after	resemble, appearance character	in Jagat really takes or after his dad.
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Take care of	look after	I'll take care of your plants while you're away.
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Take off	leave the ground	The plane took off at 6 a.m.
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Take on	hire or engage staff	Business is good so the company is taking on extra staff.
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Take out	remove; extract	She took out a pen to note the address.
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Tell off	reprimand/criticize severely	The teacher told her off for not doing her homework.
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Think over	consider	I'll have to think over the proposal before I decide.
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Try on	wear something to see if it suits or fits	I'm not sure about the size. Can I try it on?
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Turn down	refuse	I couldn't turn down an offer like that!
Use up	finish a product (so that there's none left)	The kids have used up all the toothpaste.
Vouch for	express confidence in, or guarantee something	You can give the keys to Aadi. I can vouch for him.
Watch out	be careful	Watch out! There's a car coming.
Wear out	1. become unusable 2. become very tired	1. Tina wore out her shoes visiting the city. 2. At the end of the day Tina was worn out.
Work out	1. do physical exercise 2. find a solution or calculate something	1. I work out twice a week at the gym club. 2. It's expensive but I haven't worked out the exact cost yet.
Wipe off	Clean (board, table).	The teacher asked Leena to wipe off

the board.