

Idioms & Phrases

The background is a vibrant yellow with a subtle pattern of concentric circles and numerous small, white, multi-pointed starburst shapes scattered throughout. Two larger, semi-transparent white circles are also visible, one in the upper right and one in the lower left.

Idioms & Phrases

acid – the acid test

Way to determine the quality or workability of something.

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across - across the board

Applicable to all.

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ado - without further ado

Without wasting any more time.

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alive - alive and kicking

Still existing and very active.

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all – all at once

All done together at the same time.

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all – all in all

Take into account every part; on the whole

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all – all or nothing

Either done completely or in the exact way, or nothing; no compromise.



all - all the same

In spite of that.



all – it's all go

Buzzing with activity.



argue – argue the toss

To argue against a decision already made.



arm - arm in arm

With arms linked.



arm - up in arms

Enraged and protesting vigorously.



arm – with open arms

Receiving with great affection or enthusiasm



bag - bag and baggage

One's personal possessions.



bag - bag of bones

Used to refer to a very thin person or an animal.



balance - balance of payments

The difference in total value between payments for import of and earnings from export of goods and services.



balance - balance of trade

The difference in total value between a country's import and export of goods, excluding services.



baptism - baptism of fire

One's first experience in an activity which is often difficult and painful.



bare - bare one's soul

To make known one's previously unknown facts or feelings.



bare - the bare bones

The essential parts of something.



bat - bat one's eyelashes

To make rapid opening and closing of one's eyes.



bated - with bated breath

In anxiety and suspense.



belt - below the belt

Unfair; breaking the rules.



belt – tighten one’s belt

Cut down on spending.



belt – under one’s belt

To have achieved something or gained considerable experience.



bend – bend over backwards

To be helpful with someone’s wishes or demands.



bend – bend someone’s ear

To talk at length with someone.



bend – bend the rules

Do what normally is not allowed



bend – on bended knee

Requesting someone seriously to do something.



best – all the best

An expression of good wishes.



better – go one better

Outdo someone else.



better – one had better

One would find it more advisable or advantageous to do.



better – one's better half

One's spouse



beyond - beyond the sea

In a foreign country; abroad.



bit - a bit part

A minor and insignificant acting part in a film.



bit - a bit previous

Before the due time.



bit – bit by bit

Gradually.



bit - do one's bit

To contribute one's service or do one's share of the work.



bite - bite the bullet

Forced to perform an unpleasant or difficult task.



bite - bite the dust

To die, fail or be defeated.



bite - bite your tongue

Refrain oneself from saying something.



black – black and white (in)

In writing so that it's clearly stated, not doubtful.



black - in the black

To have money in one's account.



blaze – a trail

Lay a path through unknown territory; to be the first to develop something new.



blessing - a mixed blessing

A situation that has both advantages and disadvantages



blessing – blessing indisguise

An initial misfortune that later produces good results.



blood - in cold blood

In a deliberate and merciless way.



blood - in one's blood

Firmly established in one's character.



blow – blow a fuse

Lose one's temper.



blow – blow one's mind

To excite or impress someone very strongly.



blow – blow one's nose

To clean one's nose by blowing through it into a cloth or piece of tissue paper.



blow – blow one's top

Lose one's temper.



blow – blow the whistle (on)

To inform an authority or expose publicly someone's wrongful act or something that is wrong.



blow - come to blows

To start hitting each other or a fight.



blue – blue eyed boy

Someone who is treated with special favour.



blue – blue with cold

Extremely cold.



blue – boys in blue

The police.



boat - rock the boat

Disturb an existing situation.



boat - the same boat (in)

Be in the same difficult situation as someone else.



body – body and soul

Completely.



body – body of water

A large area of water such as a lake.



bone – bone of contention

Cause of argument or disagreement.



bone - make no bones (about)

To not hesitate about doing or saying something.



book – by the book (go)

To observe exactly the rules and instructions.



book - someone's good book (in)

It means that someone is pleased with or approves of someone else.



born - not born yesterday

Not easily deceived or gullible.



bound - know no bounds

Have no limits.



bound – out of bounds

Outside of allowed area of play.



brain - pick someone's brains

To get information from someone who knows a lot.



break – break new ground

Venture into new sphere of activity; uncover new information.



break – break of day

Dawn.



break – break one's word

To not do what one has promised.



break – break the ice

To initiate a conversation between strangers.



break - make the break

To end a relationship.



breath – waste one's breath

To speak without getting the message through.



breath – hold one's breath

To cease breathing to see what is going to happen.



breath – out of breath

To experience difficulty in breathing after some vigorous exercises.



breath – under one’s breath

To say in a low voice so that no one can hear.



breeze – be a breeze

To be something that can be done or dealt with ease.



bridge – bridge the gap

To narrow the difference between two things.



bright – bright and early

Very early in the morning.



bright - the bright lights

The kind of life in big cities that attract people.



broke – go for broke

Risk all that one has in a determined attempt to achieve something.



brother - brothers in arms

Soldiers who have been in combat together in the same war.



buck – a fast buck

Money that is quickly and easily earned.

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buck – pass the buck

Shift the blame or responsibility to someone else.

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bumper – bumper-to-bumper

(Traffic) very close together and moving slowly.

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burn – burn one's boats/bridges

Do something that can't be reversed.

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bury – bury the hatchet

End a quarrel or conflict and be reconciled.

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business – business is business

Used to mean making profit overrides everything else.

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business – like nobody's business

Exceptional.

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butterfly – butterflies in one's stomach

An unpleasant sensation in one's stomach when one is nervous.

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buyer - a buyer's market

Situation in which supply of goods and shares is more than demand, and prices are low.

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by – by and by

Before long; soon.

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by – by and large

On the whole.

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by – by the by

By the way; incidentally.

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call – call attention to

To divert people's attention to something.

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call – call into question

To express doubt about something.

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call – call of nature

A need to urinate or defecate.

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call – call one's shots

To predict one's course of action.

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call – call someone’s bluff

To challenge someone to carry out their threat, so as to expose it as an empty threat



call – call the shots

In a position to decide or initiate action.



call - the call of

A strong appeal of a place, an occupation, etc. that draws someone.



can – can of worms

An awkward situation that is likely to give rise to many problems and prove embarrassing.



cap – cap in hand

Seeking a favour in a humble way.



capture - capture someone’s heart

To be greatly attracted to someone.



card - on the cards

Likely to happen.



carry - carry oneself well

To move and behave in an appropriate manner.

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carry – carry the day

To be triumphal.

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carry - get carried away

To lose one's self-control.

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cash – cash and carry

A shop where goods are paid for in full and carried away by the buyer

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cast - be cast away

To be stranded on a shore or island after a shipwreck.

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cast - be cast down

Feel depressed and discouraged.

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catch – catch one's breath

To momentarily stop breathing in shock, surprise or fear.

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catch – catch sight of

To suddenly notice someone or something.

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catch – catch someone's eye

Attract someone's attention through eye contact; to be noticed by someone.



cause – cause and effect

An action and its effect.



cause – make common cause

Join together to attain a particular goal.



chalk – chalk it up

Put it to one's credit.



chance – by any chance

Possibly or as is true.



chance – stand a chance

Have the likelihood to succeed.



chance – take a chance

Run a risk of things not happening or of danger.



chance – take one's chance

Do something risky with the hope of success.



change – change of air

In a different place or climate that is usually better.



change – change one's tune

To react or change one's opinion after something has happened.



change – for a change

An experience which is different from before and is usually better.



charge – free of charge

No payment required.



charge – in charge of

Having control or command of.



charge – on a charge

Accused of a criminal offence.



charge – put in charge

Entrust someone with power to control or supervise.



cheap - on the cheap

Incur less cost than is needed



cheek – cheek by jowl

Very close together.

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cheek – cheek to cheek

(dancing) heads close together.

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chew – chew the fat

To talk in a friendly way.

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chicken - she's no chicken

She is no longer young.

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chop - get the chop

To lose one's job; to cancel something, e.g. a building project.

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chord - strike a chord

To express an agreeable opinion or acceptable idea.

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circle - come full circle

Return to a past position or situation.

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circumstance - in suspicious circumstances

Involving foul play.

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circumstance - under/in no circumstances

To say that something must not be allowed to happen no matter what.



circumstance - under/in the circumstances

At the given situation.



circumstance – victim of circumstance

Someone who is unfavourably affected in a difficult situation.



claim - lay claim to

To state one's right to or ownership of something.



clean – a clean break

An end to a relationship; freeing oneself from a situation.



clean - a clean slate/sheet

Free from misbehaviour, mistakes made or a goal scored by the rival team.



clear - clear the air

To reduce a tense situation by discussing in a calm manner.



clear – clear the decks

To do something in order to prepare for some other things.



clear -in the clear

Not under suspicion or guilty.

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clip – at a clip

At once.

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clip – clip someone's wings

To curb someone's aspirations.

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clock - against the clock

Not having much time left.

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close - a close shave

Narrow escape from an accident or danger.

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clutch – clutch at straws

Make a desperate attempt at salvaging a hopeless situation.

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coast – coast is clear

Safe to do something without the risk of being noticed or caught.

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cock – cock a snook

To express contempt at.

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cold – cold hard cash

Paper money and coins as opposed to cheques or credit cards.

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cold – in cold blood

In a cruel and merciless way.

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cold – the cold shoulder

Display of one's unfriendliness

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come – come of age

To attain adulthood.

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come – come off it

Used to express one's disbelief.

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come – come on strong

To show a confident and forceful personality.

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come – come to mind

(of a thought, idea, etc.) suggest itself.

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come – come to nothing

To produce no effect or result.

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come – come to pass

To happen eventually.

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come – come up dry

To become unsuccessful.

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come – come what may

No matter what happens.

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commit – commit to paper

To write down.

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common – in common with

To be in the same way as someone else.

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common – the common good

Something shared by two or more parties and acts as a basis for further interaction.

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common – the common touch

The ability to interact with the ordinary people.

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concern - a going concern

A business that is still operating and making a profit.

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conquer – conquer somebody's heart

To make that somebody fall in love with one.

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conscience – in all conscience

In fairness; by any reasonable standard.

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conscience – on one's conscience

Feeling guilty about something.

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conscience – prisoner of conscience

A person who is detained or imprisoned because of his or her political or religious beliefs.

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cook – cook somebody's goose

To spoil a person's plans.

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cool – a cool million

Large amount that someone can easily earn.

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cool – cool one's heels

To be kept waiting

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cool - keep one's cool

Maintain a calm attitude in a tense situation.

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cool – lose one's cool

To be unable to remain calm in a difficult situation.



corner – around the corner

Very near; imminent; approaching.



corner – corner the market

To control the supply of a commodity.



corner – fight one's corner

To defend one's position.



corner – in someone's corner

To offer support and encouragement.



corner – turn a corner

To begin to show improvement.



corridors – corridors of power

Place where crucial decisions of administration are made.



cost – cost a bomb

Cost a lot of money.



cost – at all costs

Regardless of the obstacles that one has to overcome.



cost – cost someone dear

To cause someone to suffer a huge loss.



count - count one's blessings

Used to tell someone how lucky they are and be grateful for what they have.



count - count the cost

To examine the effect of one's terrible mistake.



count - count the days

To be anxiously waiting for the days to pass.



cover - cover one's back

To refrain from acts that will invite criticism.



cover - cover one's tracks

To conceal evidence of one's movement.



crack – crack of dawn

Daybreak



cradle - the cradle of

Place in which something important began or was nurtured.



cream - the cream of

The most outstanding group of people.



credit - line of credit

Amount of credit allowed to a borrower



crime – crime doesn't pay

Used to mean the criminal will sooner or later be brought to justice.



crime - crime of passion

A crime committed in a fit of sexual jealousy.



critical – the critical list

A list of hospital patients who are extremely ill or seriously injured and at risk of death



cross - at cross purposes

Mutual misunderstanding due to each side referring to a different matter



cross – cross a cheque

To draw or print two parallel lines across a cheque so that it can only be paid into a bank account.



cross - cross one's fingers

Cross one finger with another as a sign of hope that a good or the wished-for thing will happen.



cross - cross one's heart

Make a sign of the cross over one's heart to emphasize what one is saying is true.



cross – cross one's mind

Occur in one's thought.



cross - cross swords with

To have an argument or dispute with someone.



cross - cross the floor

Walk over to join the opposing side in Parliament.



cruel - a cruel blow

A tragic event that is so unfair and occurs so suddenly.



cry - in full cry

In hot pursuit



cudgel – cudgel one’s brain

To think very hard about something.



cudgel - take up cudgels

To start to fight for or defend something one strongly believes in.



curry - curry favour with

To bring oneself into favour with someone by flattering or pleasing them.



cut - a cut above

Noticeably better than others.



cut - cut a dash

To appear attractive when one puts on particular clothes.



cut - cut and dried

(agreement, decision, etc.) reached and cannot be changed.



cut - cut and paste

In computing, remove text from one location to place it on another.



cut - cut and run

Withdraw from a situation that becomes difficult rather than attempt to cope with it.



cut - cut and thrust

Uncontrolled and rough environment.

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cut - cut both ways

Have both good and bad sides

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cut - cut in line

To jump queue.

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cut - cut it out

Used to tell someone to stop saying or doing something.

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cut - cut no ice

Will not be able to bring about change in someone.

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cut - cut somebody free/loose

To set someone free by cutting the rope that binds them.

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cut - cut somebody short

To stop someone from finishing what they are saying.

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cut - cut someone dead

To deliberately ignore someone.

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cut - cut the cord

To not continue depending on someone.



cut - cut the crap

Used to tell someone to stop wasting time on minor details and concentrate on the important ones.



cut - cut the mustard

To be good enough to reach certain standard.



cute - get cute with

To be mischievous.



dagger – at daggers drawn

With mutual hatred.



damnedest - do one's damnedest

To try extremely hard to succeed or obtain something.



damsel – damsel in distress

A young woman who needs to be rescued.



dark – in the dark

In a state of ignorance.



day – day of reckoning

The time when someone has to face up to the consequences of their actions.



dead - be dead meat

To be in serious trouble.



dead – dead and buried

Over and finished, no longer worth considering.



dead – dead man's shoes

Succeeding someone or inheriting his property is only possible on his death.



dead – dead on time

At the stated or agreed time.



deal - it's a deal

Used to express one's agreement to something.



deal - strike a deal

Mutually agree to do something for each other.



death – at death's door

So ill that one may die soon.



death - on death row

To be kept in the area of a prison where prisoners awaiting execution are confined.



declare – declare an interest

To make known publicly that one holds an interest in something.



decline – someone’s declining years

Last years of one’s life when one experiences diminishing physical strength and good health.



delusion – delusions of grandeur

Possessing a very strong sense of self-importance.



dice – dice with death

To place oneself in a rather risky position.



dish – dish the dirt

To engage in casual conversation or idle gossip about other people.



divide – divide and rule

To maintain control over people, and provoke dissent between them to ensure they do not rise in opposition.



do – do or die

To persist in a course of action even if the outcome is death.



do - dos and don'ts

The things that one must and must not do in a given situation.



do – that does it!

Used to show that one can tolerate no more.



dog - a dog's age

A very long time.



dog - dog eat dog

A situation in which people compete ruthlessly.



dog – going to the dogs

Deteriorating with no possibility of improving.



doing – take some doing

Involving hard work or much effort.



domino - the domino effect

A situation in which one event triggers similar events around it to happen successively.



done - a done deal

An agreed proposal or a completed business deal.



done - the done thing

To be socially acceptable.



dot – on the dot

Punctually.



dot – to a dot

Exactly; precisely.



dotage – in one's dotage

In one's old age.



double - at/on the double

Very quickly.



drag – drag one's feet

To be deliberately slow to do something.



drain - down the drain

Entirely wasted.



draw - draw a blank

To be unsuccessful, especially after searching for something such as evidence, etc.



draw – draw someone’s eye

To make someone notice something.



dress – dress a salad

Add a mixture of additional ingredients onto a salad.



dress – dressed to kill

Quality clothes worn to make a striking impression.



drop – drop a bombshell

To suddenly reveal a shocking piece of news.



drop – drop a clanger/brick

To pass an embarrassing remark in a social environment.



drop – drop a hint

To convey something in an indirect way by what one says or does.



drop – drop one’s guard

To cease keeping careful watch for possible danger.

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drown – drown one's sorrows

To forget one's problems by drinking a lot of alcohol.

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drum – drum one's fingers

To unconsciously display one's anxiety.

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due – in due course

At the appropriate time in the future.

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due – pay one's dues

Make regular payments to; fulfil one's obligations.

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duff - up the duff

Pregnant.

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dust – dust and ashes

Something that causes great disappointment.

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early - an early grave

Dying too soon.

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early – it's early days

Early in time for something to happen, etc.

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earn – earn one’s keep

To do enough work to justify what one receives in return.

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earth – go to earth

Go into hiding.

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eat – eat humble pie

Admit one’s mistake and offer an apology.

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eat - eat one’s words

Retract one’s statement, usually under pressure.

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economy – economies of scale

To economic benefit of production of an item in large quantities.

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effect - to that effect

Getting the desired outcome or meaning.

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empty – empty your bowels

To defecate.

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end – be the end

Be the limit of what one can tolerate.



end - days on end

Lasting many days.



end – end in itself (an)

Something that one really wants to do, and not for other reasons.



end – end it all

To kill own self; commit suicide.



end – end to end

Arrange things in a row with ends touching



end – in the end

Eventually; ultimately.



end – make ends meet

To live within one's means.



end - to that end

To aim at or achieve something.



end – to this end

For this purpose.



even - get even with

To inflict harm or insult on someone just as much as they have harmed or insulted you.



event - in any event

Used to emphasize that an event will happen besides others that may happen.



event - in the event

Used to emphasize what actually happened or might happen in a given situation.



ever – ever and anon

Occasionally; from time to time.



every – every now and again

Occasionally.



every – every now and then

Sometimes but not often.



every – every other

Each alternate item in a list of items.

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every – every so often

Occasionally; sometimes.

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every – every Tom, Dick, and Harry

Used to refer to ordinary people in general.

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every – every which way

In all directions.

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evil - the evil eye

A look from the evil eye according to old superstition is believed to cause considerable harm.

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eye - an eye for an eye

Retaliation in kind as appropriate to deal with a wrong.

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eye – be all eyes

Be watching eagerly and attentively

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eye - catch someone's eye

To attract someone's attention.

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eye – close one's eyes

To deliberately not notice something unpleasant.

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eye – make eyes at

To look at someone with sexual interest.

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eye – open someone's eyes

To make someone aware of something.

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eye - the naked eye

Seeing without using a telescope, microscope, etc

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eye – to my eye

In one's opinion with regards to how someone or something looks.

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eyeball - eyeball to eyeball

Face to face with someone in a mutually angry or hostile way.

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face – face the music

Accept the consequences of something one has done.

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fact – facts of life

Information about sex.

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fair - fair and square

Accurately; honestly and openly.



fair - fair's fair

Request for fair play or treatment, or a statement that something has been fair.



fair - fair-weather friend

A person whose friendship is not genuine, especially in times of crisis.



fair - the fair sex

Women.



faith – act of faith

An action demonstrating trust.



faith – breach of faith

Betrayal of trust; insincerity.



faith – in good faith

With intention to be honest; sincerity.



fall – fall foul of

To break a rule or law.



fall – fall from grace

To stop being liked by others, especially those in authority.



fall – fall into line

To conform to what is required of someone.



fall – fall into place

To begin to become clear or make sense.



fall – fall short of

To be less than the amount or standard required.



fancy – take someone's fancy

Make something attractive or interesting to someone.



favour – in favour of

In support of or agree to something.



feather – feather in (one's) cap

An achievement that one should be proud of.



feel – feel the pinch

Experience difficulties, especially financial.



fiddle – play second fiddle (to)

To take a less important role.



fight – fight or flight

Instinctive response to a threatening situation.



fight – fight shy of

To avoid doing or becoming involved with something.



fill – fill someone's shoes

Substitute someone's role and perform it acceptably.



fill – fill the bill

To have the qualities suitable for a particular purpose.



find – find favour with

To be liked or approved of.



fine – one's finest hour

Time when someone experiences their greatest success.



fire – fire and brimstone

Refers to hell.



first – at first light

Dawn; daybreak.



first – first among equals

The most outstanding one.



first – first and foremost

The primary purpose of something.



first – first of all

Before doing anything else.



first –first things first

Dealing with things in or



flat – go flat against

To completely disregard or reject outright.



flesh – flesh and blood

Someone of one's own family.



flesh - put flesh on

To provide details so as to clarify.



floor – take the floor

To dance or speak at a social event, etc.



fly – fly a kite

To try out something new so as to test reaction.



flying - with flying colours

Very successfully.



follow – as follows

To present a list of something.



follow – follow suit

To do the same thing as someone has just done.



follow – follow the herd

To just blindly do what other people do.



foot - feet of clay

Someone whose faults are not easily known.



force – by force of

By means of.



force – come into force

Start to operate.



force – force of circumstance

External factors that influence one's decisions



force – force someone's hand

Exert pressure on someone to do something.



force – force the bidding

To deliberately and quickly drive up a price



force – force the issue

To pressure someone to make a hasty decision.



force – forces of darkness

Evil influences or the devil.



force – forces of nature

Natural forces such as the earthquakes, volcanoes, wind, etc.



fortune – a small fortune

A large amount of money.



fortune – soldier of fortune

A soldier who will fight in return for money; a mercenary.



French – take French leave

To absent oneself from work, etc. without permission.



full – full steam ahead

To proceed or do something energetically and speedily.



further - until further notice

Until one is notified again.



garbage – garbage in, garbage out

Inferior quality input will produce low quality output.



gauntlet - run the gauntlet

Take whatever criticisms or attacks that come one's way.



get – get a life.

Used to tell someone that they are boring.



go – go for it

Put in all one's effort to get something.



go – go without saying

To be self-evident.



go - have a go

Make an attempt at something.



go – on the go

On the move all the time.



go – who goes there?

A sentry's challenge to someone to identify themselves.



goalpost – move the goalposts

Alter the rules in an unfair manner.



grade - make the grade

To accomplish what is required. Succeed.



grass – the grass roots

The ordinary people as opposed to the leaders in an organization.



grease - grease someone's palm

To bribe someone.



grease - like greased lightning

Extremely fast.



green - green with envy

Very envious or jealous



green - green-eyed monster

Jealousy.



green - have green fingers

Clever at growing plants.



grim – like/for grim death

With great determination.



grind - the daily grind

The monotonous work that one does every day.



grit – grit one's teeth

To persevere in one's efforts to overcome something difficult.



groan – moan and groan

Complain constantly.



guard – guard of honour

A group of soldiers assembled to ceremonially welcome an important visitor, usually a foreign head of state.

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guard – lower your guard

Fail to give proper care or attention to.

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guess - be anybody's guess

Something that no one knows but only guess at.

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guest - be my guest

Used to express permission to someone to do what they have asked to do.

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guest – guest of honour

The most important person invited to a special function.

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gun – jump the gun

To act sooner than one should without considering the proper time to do it.

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gutter – the gutter press

Newspapers engaging in sensationalism and considered as fit only for the gutter

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hair - a hair's breath

A very small margin

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half - half a mind (to)

Used when one is unsure about doing something.

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hammer - hammer something home

To convey one's message across effectively by speaking intelligibly.

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hammer - under the hammer

Be for sale at an auction.

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hand - hand and hand

Be involved with

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hand - hand in glove

In close cooperation with someone in an illegal activity.

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hand - hand to mouth

With just enough money and food to survive on.

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hand - hand-and-glove

Inseparable or on intimate terms.

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hand – lend a hand

To help someone in doing something.



hand – out of hand

Out of control. Immediately; without thinking.



hang – hang your head

To look ashamed and guilty.



hard – be hard hit

Adversely affected by something.



hard - be hard on

To be too strict or harsh on someone.



hard – be hard put

To have difficulty doing something.



hard - hard done by

To be treated in an unfair or harsh manner.



hard - hard luck story

A story told to gain sympathy.



hard - hard of hearing

Having difficulty in hearing.



hard – hard to take

Difficult to accept or believe.



hard - no hard feelings

No feelings of resentment.



hard – take something hard

Feel very unhappy or disappointed about something.



hard - the hard stuff

Strong alcoholic drink



hard – times are hard

Time when one has problems and difficulties.



head - a clear head

Being able to think clearly in a difficult situation.



head - a head for

An ability to tolerate something.



head - come to a head

Reach a crisis.



head – head over heels

Madly in love with something.



head – head will roll

Some people will be punished or dismissed.



head – keep one's head

Remain calm.



head – lose one's head

Lose self-control.



heart – break someone's heart

To make someone feel very sad.



heart – change of heart

Change in one's thinking.



heart – cross one's heart

Used to make a promise.



heart – from the heart

With the sincerest feeling.

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heart – have the heart

Show pity; be merciful.

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heart – heart and soul

With all one's affections.

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heart – heart of gold

A kind or generous nature.

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heart – heart-to-heart

Frank, sincere (talk)

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heart – learn by heart

Learn by memorizing.

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heart – one's heart's desire

Someone's greatest wish for something.

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heart – open one's heart

To make known one's feelings or thoughts.

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heart – take to heart

Take something seriously.



hearth – hearth and home

One's home and family.



hedge – hedge your bets

Avoid total loss by placing similar bets on the other side.



heel - take to (one's) heels

Run away quickly.



hell – hell for leather

At great speed.



hell – hell on earth

A place that is extremely unpleasant.



high – have high hopes

Confident of successful outcome.



high - high and dry

Left with nothing.



high – high and mighty

Feeling self-important; arrogant.



history – history repeats itself

There's a tendency for events to happen again in a similar way.



hit – hit rock bottom

To descend to the lowest level.



hit – hit it off

To become friends in a natural way.



hit – hit the bottle

To start to drink to excess.



hit – hit the jackpot

To win a huge amount of money.



hit – hit the road

Set forth on a journey



hold – hold a conversation

To get engaged in a conversation with someone.



hold – hold one's horses

To stop for some reason.



hold – hold one's own

To do something or succeed without help from anyone.



hold – hold the fort

To take over someone's responsibility while they are away.



hold – hold the line

To not yield; to wait until the other person is ready to answer one's telephone call.



hold – hold your fire

Used to order soldiers to cease firing.



hold – no holds barred

Without any restrictions or rules.



holier – holier than-thou

Self-righteous.



home – home and dry

Having succeeded in getting something done.



honour - do the honours

To do things such as serve food or drink at a social occasion.

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honour – in honour of

Used to show respect and admiration of someone.

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honour – man of honour

A man of high moral standards.

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honour – on one's honour

Under a moral duty to do something.

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honour – on/upon my honour

Used to express one's sincerity.

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hook - off the hook

No longer in a difficult situation.

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hop – on the hop

Unprepared; busy.

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hope – hope against hope

Hope for something that probably will not happen.

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house – house of God

A church, a temple.



house – on the house

A drink or meal paid for by the bar, restaurant, etc. management.



human - the human touch

A close relationship of communication or understanding.



ice – on thin ice

In a risky situation.



idea - get the idea

To start to understand something



idea - have no idea

Have no knowledge of



idea - that's the idea

That's exactly right



ill – ill at ease

Feeling uncomfortable or embarrassed.



ill – speak ill of

Say something bad about someone.

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immemorial – since/from time immemorial

Starting from a time in the distant past which people cannot now recall.

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influence - under the influence

Affected by an effect or an imperceptible power exerted by someone or something that causes changes in conduct or the character.

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ins – ins and outs

The details of a system, workings, etc.

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inside – on the inside

Being able to provide internal information.

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issue – die without issue

To die without having any children.

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issue – take issue with

To dispute the truth or validity of.

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itchy – have itchy feet

Have the desire to travel or go somewhere.

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Jekyll – Jekyll and Hyde

A person having dual personalities, one good and one evil.

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job – just the job

The very job that is wanted.

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job – on the job

While doing work; being part of the work.

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join – join forces

Combine efforts for a common purpose.

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jump – jump a light

To drive past a red traffic light.

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jump – jump for joy

To be very excited and happy.

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jump – jump the gun

To begin something without proper planning.

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jump – jump the queue

Move ahead of other people in a queue.

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jump – jump to conclusions

To form a quick opinion without considering the facts.



key – in/out of key

In/not in agreement or harmony with.



kick – kick a habit

Stop doing something which one does habitually.



kick – kick one's heels

To be kept waiting for a long time.



kick – kick someone upstairs

Promote someone to an ostensibly higher and more influential position in a business.



kick – kick the bucket

Die.



killing - make a killing

To make a large profit in a short time.



kind – of a kind

Scarcely worthy of what is specified or described.



kiss – kiss of death

A kindly act which produces negative outcome



kiss – kiss of life

Mouth-to-mouth resuscitation.



kiss – kiss someone's arse

To be excessively slavish or obedient to someone.



knife - under the knife

Having a surgery.



knock – knock it off

Used to tell someone to stop doing something.



know – know by heart

Have learned something by rote and now able to repeat it from memory.



know – know no bounds

Have no limits.



know – know one's onions

Be experienced in or knowledgeable about something.



know – know one's stuff

Be fully acquainted with something.



know – know the ropes

To have experience in or familiar with something.



know – know what's what

Have the necessary experience, ability or knowledge to do something successfully.



large - in large part/measure

Mostly; to a great extent.



latest - at the latest

No later than the time referred to.



law – law and order

A situation in which people are abiding by the law.



lead – lead someone astray

To influence someone to act or behave in a wrong way.



least – at the very least

At the minimum; adopting the most negative stance.



least – least of all

Not less than; if nothing else;



least – not in the least

Not at all.



lend – lend an/one's ear

listen sympathetically to someone.



lend – lend weight to

To put more value on something.



letter - to the letter

Pay close attention to every detail.



liberty – take liberties with

To conduct oneself in an improper manner towards; to deal with rules, writing, etc. without due consideration to facts.



liberty – take the liberty

To do something without permission.



lick – at a lick

Very fast.



lick – lick one’s wounds

To think carefully and seriously about one’s defeat or disappointment that has just happened.



lick – lick someone’s boots

More than willing to serve or please others.



lie – lie in state

Display of an important deceased person’s body in a public place for people to pay their last respect.



life – come to life

To become exciting, or lively; to start working again.



life – for dear life

Do whatever one can to escape death.



life – full of life

Very lively and happy.



life – larger than life

Someone who attracts a lot of attention due to an exceptional personal attribute they possess.



life - way of life

The way people choose to live their lives.



light – bring/come to light

To make or become known.



light – throw light on

To clarify things by providing more or new information.



line - along party line

Acting in accordance to the party one belongs to.



line - bring into line

To make to conform



line - fall into line

To conform to the way in which something is done.



line - in line with

In accordance with



line - line of vision

The direction in which an observer looks.



line - on the line

at serious risk, (job, etc.) likely to be lost.



line - out of line

Behaving unacceptably or inappropriately.



lip - pay lip service

express support without action to show it.



lip - read one's lips

To listen carefully so as to understand what is said.



living - in living memory

That can still be remembered by people.



loiter – loiter with intent

Hang around a place with criminal intent.



long - at long last

Finally; after a long time



loose - on the loose

Having escaped from prison or cage.



lose – lose one’s mind

To become insane.



lose – lose sight of

No longer able to see someone or something; to forget something.



lost – a lost cause

Something that is not likely to be achieved.



lost - be lost on

Refuse to appreciate or accept.



luck – just my luck

Used to express disappointment that something bad has happened to one.



luck – out of luck

Suffering misfortune; having bad luck.



luck – press one’s luck

Take unnecessary risks.



luck – try one’s luck

To attempt something difficult and hope it will succeed.



make – make away with

carry away secretly or illegally.



make – make or break

To be a decisive factor in the success or failure of something or someone.



man – a man’s man

A man who moves around and engages with other men at social functions and in manly activities.



man – be man enough

be strong or brave enough



man – be someone’s man

A man who satisfies fully someone’s requirement.



man - man about town

A man who is socially active.



man - man and wife (be)

To be married.



man - man of God

A deeply religious man or a priest.



man - man of letters

A male writer.



man - man to man

In direct and frank engagement between two men.



man - man's best friend

A dog.



man - to a man

Without exception.



manner – all manner of

Many different kinds of.



many - a good many

Quite a lot



many – a great many

A fairly large number of.



many – one too many

To be drunk.

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mark – leave/make its/a mark

Leave a permanent or significant impression.

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mark – make one's mark

Attain fame or distinction.

☆☆☆☆☆

mark – mark my words

Used to tell someone to be attentive to what one is saying.

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mark – near/close to the mark

Almost accurate; almost on target.

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mark – off/wide off the mark

Not correct or inaccurate.

☆☆☆☆☆

mark – on your marks

Instruction to competitors to correctly position themselves to start a race.

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marked - a marked man

Someone who is in danger of being harmed by his enemy.

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marriage – marriage of convenience

Marriage for other reasons and not for love.

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marry – marry a fortune

Marry a rich heiress.

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marry – marry into money

Marry a wealthy person or someone from a wealthy family.

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matter - matter of fact (a)

In reality; in fact.

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matter - no matter what

One will do something regardless of what happens.

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means – beyond one's means

More than one can afford.

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means - by all means

Of course.

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means – by any means

At all.

☆☆☆☆☆

means – by means of

By using something



means – by no means

Not at all.



means – man/woman of means

Man/woman who is rich.



means – within one's means

Not more than one can afford.



measure - for good measure

Additional input to what is already enough or required.



mend – mend one's fences

Make peace with someone whom one has offended.



mend – on the mend

Improving in one's health or a situation.



middle – the middle ground

Something which provides a basis for a discussion, negotiation, meeting, etc. to be carried out.



might – might is right

Used to say powerful people/countries are free from prosecution/retaliation and so can do what they like



mincemeat - make mincemeat of

To defeat someone totally.



mind – a close mind (have)

Not willing to consider new ideas.



mind – have in mind

Plan, intend



mind - have someone in mind

Thinking about someone.



mind - in/of two minds (be)

Unable to decide on something.



mind - mind over matter

The use of willpower to handle a difficult situation



mind - of one mind (be)

Decide unanimously or share the same opinion.



mind - of sound mind (be)

Posses the ability to think clearly and act responsibly.



mind - set your mind (on)

To finally decide to do something.



mind - to my mind

Used when expressing an opinion.



minute – any minute now

Very soon.



minute - by the minute

As time passes.



mirror - a mirror of

A clear idea of something



miss – Miss Right

The young woman who would make an ideal wife.



miss – miss the boat

Fail to seize an apporportunity.



miss – miss the point

Fail to understand the main idea of what is being said.



moment – for the moment

For now; for the time being.



moment – have one's moments

There're times when things are better than other times.



moment – moment of truth

A time when an outcome of something is known.



moment – of the moment

At the current time.



moon – over the moon

Greatly delighted.



more – more and more

Increasingly.



more – more or less

Approximately.



mould - break the mould

To change something completely by doing things differently.



mouth – be all mouth

Not doing what one boastfully says one can do.



mouth – watch one's mouth

To be careful of what one says.



move - make a move

To leave a place; to take action to achieve something.



mover – movers and shakers

People who wield enormous power and influence.



much - a bit much

More than necessary; unfair or unreasonable.



much – not much of (a)

Not a good example of.



mug – a mug's game

Something that is likely to be unsuccessful



nail – on the nail

Prompt payment of one's debt.



name – call someone names

To verbally insult someone.



name – in name only

Does not really exist but officially it is claimed to exist.



near – near at hand

Within easy reach; in the immediate future.



neck – neck and neck

Level in race, competition, etc.



nerve – bundle of nerves

A very tense or worried person.



nerve – have a/the nerve

To behave rudely or impudently towards someone.



nerve – lose one's nerve

Deprived of the ability to be calm and confident.



nerve – touch a raw nerve

Comment on something that someone is sensitive about.



nerve – war of nerves

Use of hostile propaganda to undermine morale.



never – never day die

Used to urge someone to refuse to despair or give up.



never – never you mind

Used to dissuade someone from asking about something.



next – next to nothing

Very little.



nine – nine days' wonder

Event, etc. that brings excitement for a short while.



none – none other than

Introducing the surprising someone.



none – none the wiser

Not knowing more at the end than at the beginning of something one does.



nook – nook and cranny

Every part of something or a place.



nothing – come to nothing

Wasted efforts with no effect or result to show.



nothing – have nothing on

Be not wearing anything; be naked.



nothing – nothing doing

Spoken when one refuses to do something.



nothing – nothing less than

Used to emphasize something that is especially relevant.



nothing – nothing to it

Not requiring much effort.



nothing – stop at nothing

Not deterred by anything; having or showing no compassion or morality.



nothing – think nothing of

To consider something as uninteresting or surprising.



now – now and again

From time to time.



now – now and then

Occasionally.



now – now now

To calm an angry or agitated person down.



nuts – nuts and bolts

The practical details.



nutshell – in a nutshell

Stating the main facts concisely.



odds – odds and ends

Various types of small items of low value



old – an old hand

Someone who has a lot of experience of something.



old – old wives' tale

A long held traditional belief that is now considered to be baseless.



old - the old country

One's country of birth and where one is no longer living in.



old – the old days

Times or a period in the past.



old – the old guard

The original or conservative members of an organization, club, party, etc.



one – one after another

One by one.



one – one and only

Someone who is known to all; unique.



one – one or two

A few, a small number of.



one - be as one

To agree about something.



one – one and all

Everyone.



one – one by one

Someone or something that moves singly in succession.



open - an open invitation

Easy accessibility to people to visit, to steal, etc.



open – an open mind

A mind accessible to new arguments or ideas.



open - be open with

Speak frankly to.



open – in open court

In a court of law that is open to the public.



open – in the open

Outdoors.



open – the heavens opened

It began to rain heavily.



order – in order that

So that.



order – in order to

With the purpose of doing



order – in short order

Without delay; immediately.



order – out of order

No longer working/working properly.



other – one's other half

One's spouse.



other – the other place

The other world.



other – in other words

Used to make an idea, etc. easier to understand.



other – the other woman

A married man's mistress.



out – out and about

Go about one's routine.



out – out with it

Used to tell someone to say out what they are thinking.



out – out-and-out

Utter, complete



outside - an outside chance

A small possibility of something happening.



outside - at the outside

At the most.



outside - on the outside

The outward appearance of a person.



over – over against

Adjacent to; compare to; in contrast to.



over – over and above

In addition to.



over – over and out

Used to indicate one has finished transmitted a message.



over – over and over

Repeatedly.



over – over the hill

No longer young; past one's prime of life and beginning to decline.



over – over the moon

Every happy or delighted.



pace – keep pace with

Move or advance at the same rate.



pain - for one's pains

For one's efforts in doing something but not getting a fair return.



pain – on/under pain of

On/under punishment of.



pair - the happy pair

Newly married couple.



part – part and parcel

Essential part of



past - A shady past

A past that one had committed a criminal or immoral act and is best kept secret.



pay – pay one’s respects

Show one’s polite consideration by calling or visiting.



pay – pay one’s way

To finance one’s own cost or expenses.



payment – payment in kind

Using goods or services instead of money as settlement



peace – hold one’s peace

Remain silent, even under provocation.



peace – keep the peace

To maintain law and order.



peace – make one’s peace

Restore friendly relations with someone after a personal dispute.



peace – rest in peace

Used in funeral service as part of a prayer.



per - as per usual

As usual.



pick – pick a fight

Force a fight.



pick – pick a lock

Use something other than the key to open a lock.



pick – pick holes in

Criticize adversely; find fault with.



pick – pick one's nose

To remove mucus from one's nose with one's finger.



pick – pick one's teeth

To remove bits of food from one's teeth with something pointed.



pick – pick someone's pocket

To steal secretly from someone's pocket.



pity - for pity's sake

Used to show one's growing irritation.

☆☆☆☆☆

plate – on a plate

Getting something without working for it.

☆☆☆☆☆

plate – on one's plate

Having so much to occupy one's time.

☆☆☆☆☆

play – come into play

To have significant effect.

☆☆☆☆☆

play – out of play

When a ball goes out of the allowed area of play.

☆☆☆☆☆

play – play for time

To gain time by employing delaying tactics.

☆☆☆☆☆

play – play it cool

To behave in a relaxed or unconcerned manner.

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play – play it safe

Avoid taking unnecessary risks.

☆☆☆☆☆

play – play on words

To make use of ambiguous words to amuse or confuse.

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play – play second fiddle

Play a subordinate role.

☆☆☆☆☆

play – play the fool

Acting in a silly way.

☆☆☆☆☆

play – play with fire

Do something that could have serious consequences.

☆☆☆☆☆

plunge – take the plunge

To finally commit oneself to doing something after much hesitation.

☆☆☆☆☆

point - belabour the point

Discuss at length.

☆☆☆☆☆

point - beside the point

Irrelevant; not important.

☆☆☆☆☆

point – case in point

An example used to clarify the topic being discussed.

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point – point the finger

To openly accuse, blame or implicate someone.

☆☆☆☆☆

poke – poke fun at

Make fun of or ridicule someone.

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pole - be poles apart

Entirely different from each other.

☆☆☆☆☆

poor – the poor man's

An inferior or cheaper substitute for someone or something as mentioned.

☆☆☆☆☆

pop - pop the question

To propose marriage to someone.

☆☆☆☆☆

pot-luck - take pot-luck

Be willing to take or eat whatever is available.

☆☆☆☆☆

pound – pound of flesh

Something that's one's entitled but which will make them to suffer to demand.

☆☆☆☆☆

practice – practice makes perfect

Perfection comes from habitual doing of something.

☆☆☆☆☆

premium – at a premium

Not readily available; at a higher than usual price.



press – go to press

To get something printed.



press – at the press

In the process of printing.



press – off the press

Printed; issued.



press – press the flesh

To shake hands with people



press – send to press

Send to be printed.



pressed – pressed for time

Not having enough time.



price – at any price

Regardless of the risk involved or what may happen.



prick – prick of conscience

Feeling of deep regret or guilt for a wrong committed.

☆☆☆☆☆

print – appear in print

Have one's work published.

☆☆☆☆☆

print – out of print

No longer available in printed form.

☆☆☆☆☆

proportion – out of proportion

More than what it should be; exaggerated.

☆☆☆☆☆

proportion – sense of proportion

The ability to judge the relative importance of things.

☆☆☆☆☆

puck – pluck a pigeon

To rob a foolish or gullible person.

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pull – pull one's face

Change one's facial expression to reflect one's feelings.

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pull – pull one's punches

To be less forceful, harsh, etc. than one is capable.

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pull – pull one's rank

Abuse one's senior position to exact obedience, etc.

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pull – pull someone's leg

To playfully cause someone to believe something that is not true.

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pull – pull the plug

Prevent something from continuing.

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pure – pure and simple

Absolutely by itself, nothing short of.

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push - at a push

With difficulty but can be done.

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push – push one's luck

To assume one will continue to be successful.

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quite - not quite

Not completely or totally.

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rack – rack and ruin

Deteriorate due to neglect.

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raise – raise the dust

To cause a disturbance.



rank – rank and file

Ordinary members of an organization.



ransom - a king's ransom

A huge amount of money.



rate - at this rate

If things continue to happen in this way



raw – in the raw

In its realistic state; naked.



read - a good read

Something that people enjoy reading.



ready - at the ready

Available to put into immediate service.



record - for the record

For something to be recorded and remembered.



record – off/on the record

Not made/made as official record.



red - in the red

To have no money in one's account.



red – red letter day

A special day that makes you very happy.



red - the red planet

Mars



regard – in this regard

Connected with something mentioned previously or just said.



regard – with regard to

Referring to something one is speaking or writing about.



rein – take the reins

Take over the responsibility.



reinvent – reinvent the wheel

To waste time in devising what is already in existence.



respect – in respect of

Concerning; with reference to; in relation to.



respect – with respect to

Referring to.



rest – rest on oars

Rest after a spell of labour.



rest – rest one's case

End one's presentation of evidence in a court of law.



ride – be riding high

Successful and popular.



ride – ride herd on

Keep watch over.



ride – ride roughshod over

Treat someone without consideration of their feelings.



right – as of right

It is one's right.



right - right-hand man

An important assistant.



right – the right stuff

The necessary or required qualities.



rise – give rise to

Cause something to happen.



rise – on the rise

Increasing in value, success, prices, etc.



rise – rise and shine

Get out of bed early and quickly.



risk – risk one's neck

To do something that involves the possibility of being killed.



risk – run the risk

Expose to the possibility of something dangerous or unpleasant happening.



rock – on the rocks

Fraught with problems and is likely to fail.



rock – rock the boat

To disrupt the existing situation.



root - put down roots

To become settled in a place.



rope – know the ropes

Know all of something through experience



rough – a rough diamond

A person who is of good character but lacks good manners.



rough – in the rough

In a natural or difficult state



rough – rough and ready

Simple or crude but effective.



round – go the rounds

To pass from one person to another.



round – in round figures

Express exact numbers as the nearest whole numbers.



round – round of applause

Audience or people are clapping to show their appreciation of something.

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round – round someone up

To gather together a number of people

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rub – rub one's hands

Indicate personal satisfaction with what one has done or what has happened.

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rub – rub shoulders with

Come into contact with.

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rule - as a rule

Usually the case; usually true.

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rule - rule of law

Situation in which everyone is subject to and abides by the law.

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rule - rule of thumb

A rough guide based on experience rather than theory.

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rule - rule the roost

To be in control.

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runner - do a runner

To flee the scene so as to escape from or avoid something.

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running – in running order

Sequence in which events are arranged to take place.

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running – in/out of the running

In/no longer in a contest.

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rush – rush one's fences

Do something hurriedly

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sad – sadder but wiser

Learn something after its effect has become clear or understood.

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safety – safety in numbers

Used to mean less danger in a lot of animals, people, etc. being together.

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salt - worth one's salt

Good at one's job.

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same – same to you

May you have the same thing.

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save – save one's breath

Not worth saying anything.



save – save one’s skin

Look after one’s own safety.



save – save the day

Solve a problem.



scene - behind the scenes

In secret away from public view.



scene – hit the scene

To arrive; appear.



scene – not one’s scene

Not something someone is interested in.



score – on that score

Concerning something just mentioned.



score – settle a score

To inflict revenge on someone who has caused an injury or harm to oneself.



scrape - in a scrape

In difficulty.



scrape - scrape the barrel

Using the last, remaining, low quality of resources.



scratch - scratch a living

Manage with just enough to survive on.



scratch – scratch one’s head

Be confused, seeking a solution.



scratch – scratch the surface

Deal with a matter but not thoroughly enough.



scratch - up to scratch

Good enough to meet a certain standard.



second - second to none

The best.



seller - a seller’s market

Situation in which demand of goods and shares is more than supply, and prices are generally high.



sense – make sense of

To find or seek out the meaning of something



serve – serve a sentence

Spend a period of time in a prison.



serve – serve one's country

To fight for one's country.



serve – serve someone right

Someone who deserves the punishment or misfortune.



service - be of service

Be available to help if help is needed.



set – be set on

To be very determined about doing something.



shadow – shadow of death

Intense gloom or peril.



shelf - off the shelf

Ready for purchase without having to place an order.



shelf - on the shelf

No longer useful or desirable; too old to get married.



shit - be shitting bricks

To be in an extreme anxious and frightened state.



shit – full of shit

Use to describe what someone says is stupid.



shit – in the shit

To be in deep trouble.



shoestring - on a shoestring

Cheaply, without spending much money.



short – in short supply

Insufficient to meet the demand of a commodity, etc.



short – short of breath

Breathing with short, quick breaths.



shot – a long shot

A poor guess or attempt at something



shot – a parting shot

A remark that one makes before leaving.



shoulder – shoulder to shoulder

Together with mutual cooperation and support.



sick – sick to death

Extremely fed up and annoyed by constant exposure to something.



sight – at first sight

First impression conveyed by something; when first seen.



sight – raise one's sights

Aim to achieve something.



sinew -sinews of war

Money.



six - sixes and sevens, at

In a disorganized and confused state.



skin - skin and bone, be

Very thin.



skin - skin someone alive

To mete out very harsh punishment to someone.



sleep – put to sleep

To administer drug or anaesthetic to someone to make them unconscious; to kill an animal painlessly.



sleep – sleep a wink

Sleep for a brief moment.



sleep – sleep on it

To defer (a decision, etc.) to a later date.



slip – let something slip

To accidentally make known information that is meant to be kept secret.



slip – slip a disc

Suffer intense pain when a piece of the series of small bones forming the backbone becomes displaced.



slip – slip of the tongue

Make a mistake when speaking.



slip – slip one's mind/memory

To forget to do something.

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slog - slog it out

To battle or compete fiercely for something.

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sly on the sly

Secretly; done in a surreptitious way.

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smell - smell a rat

To detect something suspicious.

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snap – in a snap

In a moment, immediately.

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son – son of a bitch

Used to show total disrespect for or address someone in an insulting and offensive way.

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son – son of a gun

Used to refer to someone.

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sort – a sort of

To not exactly describe someone or something.

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sort – in some sort

To a certain extent.



sort – of a sort/of sorts

Of an inferior or unusual kind, not worthy of its name.



sort - out of sorts

Not in one's normal good health.



sort – sort of

To some extent; partly.



spare – spare no expense

To use unlimited amount of money as is required.



sparks – spark will fly

There will be a heated exchange.



speak – on speaking terms

Slightly acquainted.



speak – so to speak

Not exactly as it means; in some sense.



speak – speak evil/ill/well of

To refer unfavourably/criticize/praise

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speak – speak one’s mind

To express freely exactly what one thinks.

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spick - spick and span

Completely clean and tidy.

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spill – spill one’s guts

Reveal willingly much information about something.

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spill – spill the beans

To accidentally make known what is previously unknown or secret information.

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spin – spin a story/yarn

Tell an untrue story to deceive someone.

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split – a split second

An extremely brief moment of time.

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split – split one’s sides

Laugh hysterically.

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sport - be a sport

Used when seeking favour of someone.



spout - up the spout

Unsuccessful, wasted; pregnant.



spread – spread one’s wings

To expand one’s knowledge, experience, or interest



staff - staff of life

Staple food, especially bread.



stand – I stand corrected

Ready to admit one’s view or judgement is wrong.



stand – stand in line

Queue up.



stand – stand one’s ground

Stick resolutely to one’s opinion, etc.



start – for a start

To begin with.



start – to start with

To deal with the first thing or first part of something.



state – state of affairs

Situation.



state – state of emergency

Dangerous situation in which a government assumes absolute power.



state – state of grace

Having been forgiven for sins committed while alive.



state – state of mind

The way one feels.



stay – stay of execution

A delay in obeying a judicial order.



stay – stay the course

To endure in spite of difficulties to the end of a race, etc.



steal – steal a kiss

To kiss someone who has not expected it.



steal - steal a march

To start earlier so as to gain an advantage over others.



steal – steal someone’s heart

Win someone’s love.



steal – steal someone’s thunder

To pre-empt someone’s action to achieve or impress by acting first so as to gain praise or attention.



steal – steal the show

To divert praise and attention to oneself.



steam – get/pick up steam

To gradually gather momentum.



steam – let off steam

Get rid of excess strong emotion by doing vigorous activity.



steer – steer clear of

To avoid or ignore someone or something.



stiff – stiff upper lip

Uncomplaining or showing courage in difficult situation.



stock – on the stocks

Under construction; in preparation.



stock – out of stock

Not immediately available for sale or distribution.



stock – take stock of

Review or assess a situation.



stomach - a strong stomach

Able to see or do unpleasant things without feeling sick or upset.



stone - a stone's throw (away)

A very short distance away



strapped – strapped for cash

Not having or short of money.



straw - the last straw

The last of a series of problems which becomes unbearable making one give up, react, etc.



stretch – at a stretch

Continuously without a pause or break.

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stretch – at full stretch

Using everything that one has

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stretch – stretch a point

To do or go beyond the usual limit.

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strike – strike the eye

To become particularly noticeable.

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striking – within striking distance

Close to something or an achievement.

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string – pull the strings

To be in control of affairs, events, etc.

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strong – one's strong point

Something that one is very good at.

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sundry - all and sundry

Everyone.

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swallow – swallow one's pride

Do what one feels uncomfortable or embarrassed to do by intentionally disregarding one's feelings.

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swing – in full swing

Reaching the highest point of activity.

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swing – swing the balance

Influence the result of something.

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sword – sword of Damocles

Constant threat or danger.

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sync – in/out of sync

Working well/badly together.

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table - turn the tables

Turn a disadvantage into an advantage

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table - under the table

Illegal and secret payment of money in exchange of a favour; bribery.

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take – on the take

Taking bribes.

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take – take a joke

Able to tolerate being teased or made fun of.



take – take one's time

Not acting hurriedly.



take – take that

Used to say to someone when hitting them.



talk - be all talk

Much talking, without action, about doing something.



talk – now you're talking

Used to express agreement with someone's good idea.



talk – talk sense into

To persuade someone to be sensible.



talk – talk the talk

To convince, persuade or impress by talking.



test – test the water

To seek opinions, views or feelings before taking action.



thin – thin on top

Balding.



thrill – thrills and spills

Exciting and pleasant experience.



thumb - under someone's thumb

Under someone's domination or influence.



tickle - be tickled pink

To be extremely amused or pleased.



tickle – tickle someone's fancy

To make someone interested in something.



time - ahead of time

Happens sooner than expected or the scheduled time.



time – behind the times

Not aware of or using the latest ideas or techniques.



time - take one's time

Not in a hurry.



time – time will tell

The result or the truth will be known in the future.



tit - tit for tat

Retaliation against someone who has done something bad to you.



tongue – hold one's tongue

To stop or told to stop speaking.



tongue – tongue in cheek

With humorous insincerity.



tongues - speak in tongues

Speak in an unknown language during a religious worship.



tooth - tooth and nail

With all one's might



toss – give a toss

Care about something at all.



toss – take a toss

Fall off a horse.



toss – toss one's cookies

Vomit.



touch – out of touch

Not having good understanding of something; lacking up-to-date information.



touch – touch a nerve

To bring up a sensitive subject.



touch - touch-and-go

A situation with a possible but uncertain outcome.



track – keep track of

Follow development of; to be fully aware of something.



track – off the track

Derailed; deviated from the subject in question.



trail – trail one's coat

Deliberately provoke a quarrel or fight.



trial – trial and error

Make repeated attempts or conduct varied experiments until the most successful one is determined.



trice – in a trice

Very quickly.



tried – tried and tested

A successfully proven way of doing something.



true – out of true

Not accurately or exactly positioned or out of alignment.



true – true to form

Matching one's expectation.



true – true to life

Matching reality.



turn - at every turn

All the time; every time.



two – two cents worth

Someone's opinion.



up - be up on

To be well informed about something.

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upper - on one's uppers

Very poor.

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use – use and wont

Established custom.

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vale - vale of tears

This world as regarded as a place of great sorrow and difficulties.

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walk – walk of life

The type of job a person does.

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walk – walk on eggshells

To exercise utmost caution in one's words and actions.

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walk – walk one's talk

Used to mean one's actions must suit one's words.

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wanting - be found wanting

Discovered to be inadequate for a particular purpose.

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wear - wear the breeches

Domination of the husband by the wife.

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wet – wet one’s pants

Become extremely excited or scared.

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wet - wet one’s whistle

To have an alcoholic drink.

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wheel – behind the wheel

driving a vehicle.

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wheel – wheel and deal

Involve in unscrupulous political or commercial schemes.

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wheel – wheels within wheels

Situation of extreme complexity.

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wild – in the wild

In an uncultivated or uninhabited region; a wilderness.

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wild – wild and woolly

Lacking good manners

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wild - wild goose chase

Hunt for something that does not exist or is not worth hunting for.



win – win the day

Be victorious in a battle, argument, etc.



wink – in a wink

Very quickly; any moment now.



word - a good word

Words in commendation of someone.



word - have a word

To speak briefly.



word - word of honour

Binding engagement or a promise.



word - words fail me

Too shocked or surprised to say anything.



world – the outside world

Existing away from a place or area; the rest of the world.



