



English Language

150 Important Idioms & Phrases

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Idioms and Phrases

S. No	Idioms & Phrases	Meaning	Example Sentence
1	To make clean breast of	to tell the truth about something, especially something bad or illegal that you have done, so that you do not have to feel guilty any more	After months of lying about the money, I decided to make a clean breast of it and tell the truth.
2	To keep one's temper	To hold back an expression of anger	She should have learned to keep her temper when she was a child.
3	To drive home	To emphasize an important point about something (to someone)	The teacher repeated the point three times just to drive it home
4	To have an axe to grind	To have a selfish reason for saying or doing something	The best reporting is done by people who don't have an axe to grind.
5	To end in smoke	If something ends in smoke it produces no concrete or positive result.	All the efforts of the warden to bring him round ended in smoke.
6	To be above board	To be honest and legal	The deal was completely above board
7	To pick holes	To find mistakes in something someone has done or said, to show that it is not good or not correct.	The lawyer picked holes in the witness's story.
8	To leave someone in the lurch	To leave someone at a time when they need you to stay and help them	I hope they can find someone to replace me at work. I don't want to leave them in the lurch.

9	To play second fiddle	To be in a less important position than someone or something else	Radio has been playing second fiddle to television for decades now.
10	A black Sheep	an odd or disreputable member of a group, especially within a family.	My father was the black sheep; he ran away at 16 to become an actor and his parents never forgave him.
11	A man of straw	A person or an idea that is weak and easy to defeat.	He was chosen to be the straw man as they had struck a deal with the opponent to lose the fight.
12	To smell a rat	To suspect that something is wrong	I don't think this was an accident. I smell a rat.
13	To hit the nail right on the head	To be right about something	Praveen hit the nail on the head when he said most people can use a computer without knowing how it works.
14	To set one's face against	To oppose something	Despite fierce competition from rival companies, they've set their face against price cuts.
15	To cry wolf	To cry or complain about something when nothing really wrong/give false alarm	Pay no attention, she's just crying wolf again.
16	To put one's hand to plough	To get busy, to help out, to start working	It's time to put your hand to the plow
17	To catch a tartar.	To deal with someone or something that proves unexpectedly troublesome or powerful	Now that she finally agreed to meet with you, you just might find that you've caught a tartar.
18	Bored to death	to be very bored	The speeches went on for an hour. I was bored to death.

19	You've got to be kidding	this cannot be the truth	Raj: Sandeep is getting married. Did you hear? Anu: You've got to be kidding!
20	sick and tired	to be angry and bored because something unpleasant has been happening for too long	I'm getting sick and tired of this song. They play it way too often at this club."
21	call it a day	to quit work and go home; to say that a day's work has been completed	I'm tired. Let's call it a day.
22	Get on one's nerves	to annoy someone, especially by doing something again and again	You're beginning to get on my nerves."
23	Couch potato	a lazy individual, addicted to television-watching	Couch potatoes tend to become very fat and unhealthy, you know.
24	Read one's mind	to guess what someone is thinking	"I was going to suggest that. You must have read my mind.
25	Feel blue	to feel sad	Whenever I feel blue, I like to listen to upbeat music."
26	Fender bender	a minor car accident	I can't believe the damage is going to cost me 800 bucks. It was just a fender bender."
27	Get foot in the door	to have an opportunity	I think I could get the job if I could only get my foot in the door.
28	Chicken	a coward.	"Everyone thinks I'm a chicken because I didn't go bungee jumping with them."
29	Give somebody a hard time	to make things difficult for someone	Stop giving me a hard time. There was nothing I could do about it."

30	Make up one's mind	to decide something, esp. what to do	"I can't make up my mind. Can you help me decide?"
31	Go Dutch	to share the cost of something, especially a meal;[for each person in a pair or a group] to pay for himself or herself	I actually prefer going Dutch because I don't want to feel indebt to anyone."
32	Throw in the towel	to quit; to give up.	"I saw a fight last almost two hours before one guy threw in the towel."
33	Rain or Shine	whatever the weather is;No matter what the circumstances,	"We're going camping this weekend rain or shine."
34	Easier said than done	said of a task that is easier to talk about than to do.	The doctor says I should stop smokingbut that's easier said than done.
35	Jump to conclusions	to guess the facts about a situation without having enough information	"Will you stop jumping to conclusions. You should get all the facts before you make any decisions."
36	Out of the Blue	happening suddenly and unexpectedly	He's pretty funny because he will crack a funny joke out of the blue."
37	On the Dot	at exactly the right time.	"I don't want to be waiting for you, so you'd better be there at three o'clock on the dot."
38	In a tight corner	to be in a difficult situation	After taking up this subject I really don't understand it and feel like I put myself in a tight corner.
39	A wild goose chase	a situation where you waste time looking for something that you are not going to find, either because that thing does not exist or because you have been given wrong information about	After two hours spent wandering in the snow, I realized we were on a wild goose chase.

		it.	
40	Does not hold water	not able to be proved, not correct or true	A lot of the stuff I believed in when I was 17 just doesn't hold water today
41	On the cuff	On credit	I'm sorry, Kamal. We can't put anything more on the cuff.
42	Out and out	complete, absolute, thoroughgoing	He's an out and out liar
43	A white elephant	something that has cost a lot of money but has no useful purpose	The piano table she bought turned out to be a white elephant
44	Fair and square	Completely fairly, justly, within the rules	She won the game fair and square.
45	No love lost between	if there is no love lost between two people, they do not like each other	There's no love lost between those two, they could never work together
46	Played havoc	to damage something	Stormy conditions played havoc with the fishing.
47	Green Thumb	An extraordinary ability to make plants grow well / an exceptional skill for gardening or for growing pants successfully	Houseplants provide much pleasure for the city dweller with a green thumb.
48	broke down	to become very emotional	I didn't know anyone who was killed, but I still broke down and cried when I heard about the bombings.
49	throw dust into my eyes	to mislead; deceive:	He threw dust in our eyes by pretending to be a jeweler and then disappeared with the diamonds.

50	a man of straw	a person or an idea that is weak and easy to defeat	He was accused by his opponents of being a man of straw and lacking in decisiveness.
51	off and on / On and off	Something that happens at different times, in an intermittent way	I've had toothache on and off for a couple of months.
52	give and take	mutual concessions, shared benefits, and cooperation; Lively exchange of ideas or conversation	A willingness to give and take is important for success in marriage.
53	bad hats	someone who deliberately stirs up trouble	That man is bad hat
54	break the ice	to attempt to become friends with someone; to be the first one to do something.	A nice smile does a lot to break the ice.
55	chickened out	"to manage to get out of something, usually because of	
fear or cowar dice. "	Sanjay chickened out of the plan at the last minute.		
56	make do	use whatever you can find; substitute	When our kids don't have toys, they make do with pots and pans.
57	donkey's years	a very long time	I haven't seen her in donkey's years.
58	who wears her heart on her sleeve	"to display one's feelings openly and habitually, rather than keep them private."	she wears her heart on her sleeve, and because of that it's easy to hurt her feelings.
59	talk	"To consider something thoroughly in	The panel talked over the proposal

	something over	conversation; discuss something:"	sal.
60	wet behind the ears	young and inexperienced	He may be wet behind the ears, but he's well-trained and totally competent.
61	kicked up a row/fuss/stink	to become a nuisance; to misbehave and disturb (someone)	I kicked up such a row that they told me to leave.
62	send packing	to send someone away; to dismiss someone, possibly rudely.	The maid proved to be so incompetent that I had to send her packing.
63	to eat anybody's salt	to be someone's guest.	The least you can do when you're eating someone's salt is to help them out around the house.
64	come to grief	to experience something unpleasant or damaging.	In the end, he came to grief because he did not follow instructions.
65	through thick and thin	through good times and bad times	We've been together through thick and thin, and we won't desert each other now.
66	once in a blue moon	very seldom; rarely	Once in a blue moon I have a little wine with dinner.
67	bury the hatchet	to make peace	Let's stop arguing and bury the hatchet
68	a cut above	better than other people or things	Sachin Tendulkar's batting skills make him a cut above the rest.
69	in the loop	having knowledge of and involvement in something	I am very interested to know the outcome of the debate, kindly keep me in the loop.

70	cut and dried method	it is clear and easy to understand ; it is final and will not be changed	There is no cut and dried method for doing this.
71	blacked out	to pass out; to become unconscious.	Suddenly the man blacked out during the parade and had to be helped to a quiet place.
72	hold your horses	Wait!	Hold your horses for a moment while I make a phone call
73	curtain lecture	a scolding or rebuke given in private, esp by a wife to her husband	The Principal called the latecomers to her room and delivered a curtain lecture on the subject of late hours
74	ended in smoke.	to be destroyed or ruined; figuratively, to come to nothing.	The project to clean the River Ganga ended in smoke.
75	set about	to make someone begin doing something.	He immediately set about organizing the apartment.
76	go through the hoops.	to do a lot of difficult things before you are allowed to have or do something you want	Those intending to take up the military service must be prepared to go through the hoops.
77	playing ducks and drakes	To squander; waste.	He is playing ducks and drakes with the wealth of his father.
78	facts spoke louder than words	What you do or what is evident is more significant than what you say.	Facts spoke louder than words at the Company meeting where the Director tried to paint a rosy picture of the Company's financial health.
79	had killed the goose that lay the	To destroy something that is profitable to you.	By initiating the flight with Sakshi in Office, Kajal had killed the goose that lay the

	golden egg.		golden egg.
80	I let the chips fall where they may	Let something happen regardless of the consequences and no matter what happens	I let the chips fall where they may and do not worry too much about what I want to do next.
81	a leopard cannot change its spots.	something that you say which means that a person's character, especially if it is bad, will not change, even if they pretend it has.	After trying hard to convince Narendra to change his ways, Raman realised that a leopard cannot change its spots.
82	not count our chickens before they hatched.	to plan how to utilize good results of something before those results have occurred.	Before starting work on our new project, our mentor told us to not count our chickens before they hatched.
83	pick holes	and pick something to pieces to criticize something severely; to point out the flaws or fallacies in an argument.	We should not pick holes in other's reputation.
84	brought to book	Call to account, investigate; to punish someone	The notorious thief was at last brought to book by the diligent cop.
85	hard and fast rule	if there are no hard and fast rules, there are no clear rules which you must obey	There is no hard and fast rule regarding this subject.
86	to make light	to treat something as if it were unimportant or humorous.	He made light of his teacher's advice.
87	to all intents and purposes	in all the most important ways ; In every practical sense, virtually.	To all intents and purposes he is a Goodman
88	took to their heels	to run away quickly	When the police came, the thieves took to their heels.
89	In deep	to be in a difficult situation which is h	We're going to be in deep water

	waters	ard to deal with	r if the bank refuses to authorize a bigger loan.
90	Jaundiced eye	Preconceived opinion not based on reason or experience.	You must not evaluate anything with a jaundiced eye.
91	cry up	to scream or shout in pain, joy, anger, etc.	She cried a warning out to the others.
92	to beat the air	Continue to make futile attempts, fight to no purpose	The candidates for office were so much alike that we thought our vote amounted to beating the air
93	To lose ground	to fall behind someone or something.	Stocks lost ground today despite good economic news.
94	To make both ends meet	to have enough money to pay for your basic expenses	My wages were so low that I had to take a second job just to make ends meet.
95	To fall back on	to depend on something after a loss or failure	The family has no savings to fall back on.
96	To make one's blood boil	to make someone very angry	It just makes my blood boil to think of the amount of food that gets wasted around here.
97	to keep your head	to stay calm, especially in difficult or dangerous situations	You can easily overcome this situation, if you keep your head.
98	in the same groove	attuned to something; to relate to someone or something.	It is clear that the ideas of both reformers ran in the same groove.
99	goose bumps	The literal tiny bumps you get all over your body when you are experiencing intense emotions.	When she told me that she loved me, I got goose bumps."
100	stay in	To stay connected	Call me more often man. We

	touch		got to stay in touch."
101	have the guts	Brave; courage	"I don't have the guts to go bungee jumping."
102	Im beat	Very tired	"I had a tough day today. I'm totally beat."
103	It's about time	Finally; When you wait for something, the time on a clock is the biggest factor.	"It's about time I got a chance to play."
104	to keep an eye on	To watch after; to supervise; to take care of	Don't worry about your luggage. I'll keep an eye on it."
105	know something inside out	Have knowledge of every detail of something.	Ask Mary to help you with your homework. She knows calculus inside out.
106	give someone a hand	To help someone	Can you give me a hand setting up the dining table?"
107	now and then	Once in a while	My mother calls me every now and then to see if I'm doing well."
108	keeping my fingers crossed	Hoping for good luck	"I hope it works. Let's cross our fingers."
109	out of this world	Amazing	That's the coolest thing I've ever seen. It's really out of this world."
110	pain in the ass	A source of trouble or annoyance; used to indicate that something bothers you very much. "Ass" can be seen as profanity, so another way of saying this would be "Pain in the butt" or "Pain in the neck."	I have a meeting at 7:00 in the morning. It's a pain in the ass waking up that early."

111	piece of cake	Describes something that is easy to do.	Learning to type is a piece of cake. It just takes persistence."
112	sooner or later	Eventually	She'll realize that she's doing something wrong sooner or later."
113	pull someone's leg	Making someone believe something that is not true.	I didn't know you believed me. I was just pulling your leg."
114	put oneself in one's place	To think from another point of view.	"If you put yourself in my place, you would understand why I did that."
115	I can eat a horse	To express the desire to eat a lot of food.	I'm so hungry that I can eat a horse."
116	read between the lines	To understand the underlying meaning of something that is not completely clear.	Sam isn't very good at reading between the lines. You have to tell him exactly what you want."
117	rings a bell	To remember something	It rings a bell, but I'm not one hundred percent sure."
118	sleep on it	To take time to think about something.	I'm going to need to sleep on it. I don't want to rush my answer right now."
119	play it by ear	To decide to do something as the situation develops; choosing to deal with a situation as more events unfold.	Should we plan something for this Saturday or should we play it by ear?"
120	speak of the devil	When someone appears just as you are talking about that person.	Vikram did great on her presentation. Speak of the devil... Hi Vikram."
121	grab a bite	To get something to eat	If you didn't have lunch yet, let's grab a bite to eat."

122	take it easy	To relax; to stop working so hard; to calm down	Take it easy man. You're putting too much pressure on yourself
123	Go with the flow	to not go against the common way of doing things	Why do you do everything differently? You should just go with the flow."
124	Twenty-four seven	Constantly; always available; every minute of the day and night	If a business doesn't provide twenty-four seven customer support, they will not succeed.
125	Under the weather	Feeling sick; not well	I'm going to stay home because I'm feeling under the weather today.
126	Don't sweat it	To tell someone not to worry	You can't do anything about it, so don't sweat it.
127	you can say that again	Completely agreeing with a statement	That was an absolutely delicious lunch. □ You can say that again!
128	broke	to have no money	I can't pay my bills. I'm broke.
129	beats me	To not know; to not understand	It beats me how they finished before us.
130	I don't buy it	Disagree; to not be convinced	She said she was sorry but I don't buy it.
131	keep your cool	To act normal	I know you're upset but you have to keep your cool
132	sort of	A little; kind of	Dinner was sort of expensive.
133	good for you	Expressing that you are happy for a person	Good for you, you finally passed your test
134	shotgun	To claim the front seat in a car.	Why does he always get to

			ride shotgun?
135	now you're talking	Used to agree with someone	A cold drink sounds great, now you're talking!
136	over my dead body	Disallow absolutely	You want a tattoo? Over my dead body.
137	cat got your tongue	Used when someone has nothing to say	You're being awfully quiet, cat got your tongue?
138	give it to me straight	used when you want to hear the truth	Just give it to me straight, I can take the news.
139	it's written all over your face	Used to tell someone that their face expression is giving a message	I know you did it, it's written all over your face.
140	go for it	To encourage someone to do something that they have planned	Don't let anyone stand in the way of your dreams. Go for it!
141	good for nothing	Negative statement to indicate someone has no value; useless	That girl is a good for nothing troublemaker.
142	get a life	A negative way of telling someone to stop bothering you; to tell someone to stop being a loser	Would you stop bothering me and get a life!
143	my two cents	To give or share your opinion	I don't agree with what's happening. That's just my two cents.
144	take a hike	To tell someone to go away in a negative way	He asked for my phone number and I told him to take a hike.
145	nature calls	This is used when you have to go to the bathroom.	I have to go to the restroom. Nature calls.
146	no sweat	Telling someone it is "no problem"	No sweat. It's not that big of a

			deal	
147	pie in the sky	Pleasant to imagine but impossible to attain	His dreams of becoming a famous singer are just a pie in the sky.	
148	no strings attached	Without any conditions	We are giving away free t-shirts, no strings attached.	
149	back to the grind	Going back to work after a break	Ok everyone break time is over, get back to the grind.	
150	just my luck	Expression used when something bad happens to you	Just my luck, my boss asked me to work late tonight.	