

- Two Hundred & Fifty -

REALLY USEFUL

English idioms

BY OYSTER ENGLISH

Each idiom has an easy-to-understand definition and sentence examples that will help take your English to the next level.

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There are more than 25,000 idioms in the English Language! Let's learn some of the really useful ones.

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INTRODUCTION

Congratulations for downloading this ebook. This is the first step to learning 250 really useful English idioms.

Reading an entire book of 250 idioms is a big task. However, there is no need to memorize these phrases! Just begin to become familiar with them.

You will start to recognize them as you read and listen to native English speakers.

Many learners get intimidated and anxious about idioms. But don't forget that there are idioms in ALL languages and we learn them over time.

Remember, this book is a resource that you can keep on hand to help you as you learn English.

Most of all... Relax and enjoy your English learning journey!

Nicole Nolan

Teacher at Oyster English

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The Teacher: Nicole Nolan

I started my career in International Relations and foreign language learning has been an interest of mine since I studied at university.

In June 2012, I decided to get my CELTA teaching certificate so that I could help others achieve their dream of mastering the English language. It's the perfect job for making a positive impact in people's lives.

I wish you the best in your English studies and welcome any feedback you may have.

Feel free to contact me via my website:

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Nicole Nolan

Oyster English

250 REALLY USEFUL ENGLISH IDIOMS

absent-minded: not carefully remembering or paying attention.

- My mother's so absent-minded she not only loses her keys but she also forgets where she parks her car.
- We had to fire the housekeeper because she was absent-minded and kept leaving the front door unlocked every afternoon.

take (something) into account: to carefully think about or consider something.

- We planned to drive to the beach in two hours but we didn't take Friday traffic into account.
- When sentencing the defendant to probation, the judge took into account the fact that this was the first time he had ever been in trouble with the law.

get one's act together: to improve poor or bad behavior.

- After skipping class and playing video games my first year in college, I got my act together and graduated near the top of my class.
- You really need to get your act together and sort out your finances or soon you're not going to be able to make the minimum payment on your credit cards.

clear the air: to explain something to remove doubts or misunderstanding about something.

- I broke up with my girlfriend because she refused to clear the air about some text messages she received from her ex-boyfriend.
- I wanted to wait until the third month but I finally had to clear the air and explain to my colleagues that I was often late because I had morning sickness due to my pregnancy.

up in the air: not decided, developed or finalized.

- Our plans for the summer holiday are still up in the air because my boss hasn't approved my vacation request.
- The person we'll select to replace the cleaner is still up in the air but we have a good list of candidates to choose from.

break the bank: to be too costly or expensive.

- These days, you can easily buy a smart phone without breaking the bank.
- I broke the bank going to grad school and I'm not sure how I'll ever pay back the money.

touch base (with someone): to contact someone.

- When you return from holiday, let's touch base so we can set up our next appointment.
- Take one pill every six hours to reduce pain and swelling, and I'll touch base with you this evening to see how you're feeling.

bear (something) in mind: to consider or think about something.

- Before you book your vacation, bear in mind that many flights get delayed in winter due to bad weather, so you might want to buy travel insurance.
- I know you don't particularly like Bob, but please bear in mind that he is your aunt's husband and it would be strange not to invite him to your wedding.

call it quits: to stop doing something.

- I tried and tried to learn to speak French but now I'm calling it quits.
- My parents called it quits and got divorced a few months ago.

on call: available and ready to work.

- My father is a doctor so he's on call a lot and sometimes goes to the hospital at night.
- The National Guard is on call in case there are emergencies in the coastal areas due to the hurricane.

in any case: in whatever event happens or results.

- It's supposed to rain this weekend but we're going to clean the house in any case, even if it's the beautiful weather outside.
- I don't know the exact date that I'll be in France, but in any case, I'll let you know as soon as I get my ticket.

just in case: only in a particular situation that something happens.

- I always have an extra clean shirt and tie at work, just in case a client stops in unexpectedly.
- I brought my umbrella just in case it rains this afternoon.

catch someone off guard: to surprise someone.

- When my boss told me that he was raising my salary, he really caught me off guard.
- The movie star was caught off guard when the paparazzi were waiting for him outside of the plastic surgeon's office.

take one's chances: to allow luck to decide on an outcome.

- I know it's unlikely I'll become a pop singer but I don't care—I'm taking my chances anyway.
- The plane is sold out but I'll take my chances and fly standby this evening.

to date: to or until this time.

- To date, we haven't received any complaints about our new services.
- How many people are registered for the conference to date?

day in and day out: every day repeatedly.

- My roommate works day in and day out so I never see him anymore.
- Day in and day out, I went to visit my grandmother in the hospital until she was released.

the other day: a recent time ago.

- The other day, I saw my high school teacher and she's doing great.
- Don't you remember you told me the other day that you'd take Sheila to soccer practice?

at the end of the day: after everything else has been considered, in the final analysis; finally.

- I can give suggestions, but at the end of the day, it's your decision.
- At the end of the day, I gave my best effort so I'm very pleased even though I placed second in the race.

dead set against something: determined not to do or support something.

- I wanted my daughter to go to an Ivy League school but she was dead set against it.
- My boss was dead set against me moving to another department, so I left the company.

a great deal (of something): a large amount of something.

- I have a great deal of respect for my supervisor because she's very honest and supportive.
- My wife gained a great deal of weight during her pregnancy and has been working hard over the past year to lose it.

in depth: in great detail or completely.

- There are lots of guided bus tours that go to five or six different countries but I prefer to see one country in depth.
- I didn't expect the speaker to go so in depth about the failures in his life.

out of one's depth: not knowing a lot about something.

- I took several yoga classes at my gym but when I went to the yoga retreat, I was out of my depth.
- Our boss is really out of her depth when it comes to fundraising.

in one ear and out the other: when a person hears something and doesn't remember it.

- I have to repeat everything to my kids several times. Everything I say goes in one ear and out the other.
- When I meet people for the first time, I'm so nervous that their names go in one ear and out the other.

play it by ear: to handle a situation as it happens without making a plan in advance.

- I don't know exactly what I'm going to do this weekend. I think I'll just play it by ear.
- Let's play it by ear. I don't want to make travel plans until my boss approves my holiday leave request.

eat away at something: to make something a little smaller and smaller over time.

- Every cigarette you're smoking is slowly eating away at your health.
- My manager's negative comments are really eating away at my confidence.

on edge: nervous, worried or agitated.

- He's on edge because his daughter was supposed to be at home two hours ago.
- You're always on edge when you have to travel by plane.

running on empty: having little energy and will to do something. (Like a car that has an almost empty gas tank.)

- By the end of the two-week camping trip, everyone was running on empty.
- If you keep running on empty, you're going to have a serious health crisis. The first step is to get more sleep.

at the end of the day: finally, at the end of something.

- At the end of the day, we missed our flight because there was a long line at airport security.
- At the end of the day, you won't remember these examples of idioms unless you practice using them yourself.

at one's wit's end: so completely frustrated and upset that you're unsure what to do.

- I've tried to do my math homework for more than three hours and now I'm at my wit's end.
- I'm at my wits end with the Internet at my home. It's unbelievably slow.

end up: to reach a final place or situation.

- I never thought I'd end up divorced with four kids at age 33.
- We ended up staying home and watched TV instead of going to the party.

no end in sight: it seems impossible for a situation to change or stop.

- I've been cleaning the garage for two days with no end in sight.
- It's still snowing at the beginning of April and there's no end in sight.

blow up in one's face: your plans fail completely, suddenly and cause more problems.

- My plan to surprise my wife for our anniversary blew up in my face when she found the gift and thought I'd bought it for another woman.
- Raising prices without warning really blew up in our face when 45% of our clients cancelled their service with us.

written all over someone's face: when one's expression shows their real feelings.

- When I arrived at the hospital, I asked to see my dad but his death was written all over my mother's face.
- I hope happiness wasn't written all over my face when my boss announced she was leaving the firm.

fair and square: honestly.

- This time, I won my match fair and square but no one believed me because I often cheat.
- Several years after the election, Americans still wonder if Trump won the presidency fair and square.

fall back on (something): something else to support someone after a problem, failure, etc.

- Life insurance gives your family something to fall back on if something happens to you.
- Food stamps is social program that needy people can fall back on to get food for their families in difficult times.

fall through: to not occur as planned.

- Our babysitter fell through, so I stayed home with the kids while my wife went to the concert.
- The deal fell through when our client couldn't get financing for the project.

no hard feelings: to not be angry about something.

- We decided to use a different supplier and I hope there will be no hard feelings.
- I was relieved there were no hard feelings with my coworker when I got the promotion we both had wanted.

drag one's feet: to procrastinate or do something very slowly (or not complete it) because you don't want to do it.

- I've asked my boss to give me a raise but he keeps dragging his feet.
- Our clients are dragging their feet and still haven't signed the contract.

put one's feet up: to relax and not do anything.

- I'm exhausted, but when I go to the beach this week, I'm going to put my feet up.
- A: What did you do this weekend? B: Not much, I just put my feet up and watched television.

stand on one's own (two) feet: to be able to take care of and provide for oneself.

- If you don't want to do chores, move out and stand on your own two feet.
- I've been standing on my own two feet since I was sixteen years old.

think on one's feet: to be able to think and handle a situation quickly.

- Lawyers need to be able to think on their feet when they are in the courtroom.
- We were so lucky that my mother-in-law was thinking on their feet when my baby started turning blue and she realized the baby was choking on something.

play games: to lie or behave dishonestly.

- I know my boyfriend is playing games with me because my friend saw him talking to another girl at a party last night but he told me he went to the library.
- We told our son that if he continued to play games with us and not going to school, we won't let him go to camp this summer.

get away with something: to avoid being punished or blamed for doing something wrong.

- Since my little sister is the baby, she gets away with everything.
- My brother got away with using my old research papers in high school.

get back at someone: to retaliate against someone who did something to you.

- My boss got back at me for telling his boss he was late.
- If you think you're getting back at me by not coming to my party, you're only missing a really fun evening.

give or take: approximately a certain amount.

- It will take an hour, give or take, to drive downtown during rush hour traffic or just 20 minutes if we wait until after 7:00 pm.
- By the time I got to the box office, there were already 45 people, give or take, waiting in line to buy tickets.

glued to something: concentrating and giving something one's full attention.

- My dog is always glued to the door at 6:30 because that's when my father usually arrives.
- I told Sam dinner's ready but his eyes and ears are glued to the TV.

go easy on someone: to be gentle and mild with someone.

- My daughter is starting her first job tomorrow and I hope they will go easy on her.
- The judge went easy on my client and only gave her probation since it was her first offense.

let one's hair down: to feel relaxed and comfortable enough to act and do what you want.

- The only time my mom lets her hair down at parties is if she has had several drinks.
- My roommate is such a gossip that I find it hard to let my hair down in my own home.

split hairs: to argue about small details or differences.

- Although we both agreed to divorce, my husband is splitting hairs about our settlement.
- It may seem like we're splitting hairs, but if we don't state the small details in the contract there will be disagreements later.

half the battle: a major part of the work that needs to be done.

- When trying to lose weight, eating healthy is only half the battle.
- Qualifying for Olympic trials is half the battle to an Olympic dream.

force someone's hand: to make someone do something before they want to do it.

- I wanted to wait three months before I told my boss I was pregnant, but morning sickness forced my hand and I had to explain why I was always late.
- When our neighbors all bought iPads for their children, it forced our hands to do the same.

have one's hands full (one's hands are full): to be very busy.

- During registration, we have our hands full with many different tasks.
- I'm sorry I haven't called sooner. Our hands are really full since we had the baby.

get the hang of something: learn how to do something.

- I got the hang of ice-skating the first time I tried it.
- My son got the hang of juggling a few months ago and he's already tossing knives around.

hang out (with someone): to spend time with someone.

- Sorry I can't go with you to the flea market. I like to hang out with my parents on Sundays.
- If you're not busy, we're going to hang out at the mall after school today.

not have the faintest idea: to have no understanding about something.

- I don't have the faintest idea how I got home last night from the bar.
- This is going to be interesting. The new marketing director doesn't have the faintest idea about social media.

if worst comes to worst: in the worst possible situation.

- If worst comes to worst, we can take a taxi home from the concert.
- I'd love to get a job working in London but I don't have the faintest idea how I could get a work permit.

in a bind: in a difficult situation.

- Could you lend me \$20? I'm in a bind because I forgot my wallet at home.
- If you get in a bind, here's my phone number so you can reach me.

in a mad rush: extremely hurried.

- I left my house in a mad rush this morning and forgot my lunch on the kitchen counter.
- Our connecting flight was 30 minutes late so we were in a mad rush running to the next gate.

in a rut: doing the same thing again and again.

- I was in a rut at the gym doing the same cardio exercises but when I added weight training, I really started to lose weight.
- I'm stuck in a rut at this job and need to find something more interesting and challenging.

in a sense: in a way, sort of.

- In a sense, talking with my parents through video chat is almost like being there with them.
- When I was working the night shift, my wife and I were living separate lives in a sense and we grew apart from there.

in a split second: very quickly.

- In a split second, a dog ran in the road in front of my car and I almost hit it.
- Life changed in a split second when my husband won the lottery.

In a stew (about something): upset and bothered about something.

- My husband sat on the sofa all day in a stew because I asked him to help me do some housework.
- Let me guess—the boss is in a stew because you arrived five minutes late today.

in advance: before something happens.

- In order to attend the event, you need to pay all the fees in advance.
- We need to buy the tickets far in advance of our holiday to get good prices.

in all likelihood: most likely, the most probable outcome.

- In all likelihood, I'll get married and have kids when I'm in my 30's.
- In all likelihood, he died of COVID-19 but we don't know for certain because he wasn't tested.

in all shapes and sizes: in a variety of types and forms.

- Our store has fashion styles for people in all shapes and sizes.
- We specialize in children's birthday cakes and our designs are available to order in all shapes and sizes.

in any case: regardless, no matter what happens.

- In any case, if you forget to pack something you can buy it during the trip.
- I know I don't have to be at the meeting tomorrow but I'm going in any case.

in bad taste: not proper or suitable; offensive to others.

- Wearing jeans and sneakers to the wedding was really in bad taste.
- It was really in bad taste to give your secretary a book on weight loss for her birthday.

in black and white: in writing.

- Thanks so much for the verbal offer but I also need to receive it in black and white.
- Are you crazy? Why would you say something like that in black and white? I hope you don't get fired.

in deep water: in serious trouble.

- I was supposed to finish the report two hours ago but I haven't even started, so I'm in deep water.
- My brother didn't come home last night so he's in deep water with my parents.

in depth: complete and in detail.

- This report examines the past 40 years of economic growth in this city in depth.
- The movie describes Michael Jackson's life in depth.

in flux: constantly changing.

- My company has transferred me to new offices three times in three years so my private life is also in flux.
- Turkey's currency is in flux again because the government refuses to impose capital controls to stop money flowing abroad.

under the influence: feeling and experiencing the effects of drugs, alcohol or the control of a powerful person.

- Don't drink and drive—there are severe penalties for people who are under the influence when they drive.
- It's important to monitor who your children's friends are so that they don't become under the influence of troubled kids.

take the initiative: to be the first one to make an effort to do something.

- To succeed in this large company, you have to take the initiative and volunteer for projects.
- If you want to date that guy, you're going to have to take the initiative and ask him out because he's overly shy.

know something inside out: know something completely (everything about it).

- I'm going to ace this exam—I know the material inside out.
- After 17 years working at various jobs at McDonald's, I know the fast food business inside out.

add insult to injury: to make a bad situation even worse.

- Breaking up with me was bad enough, but doing it by email added insult to injury.
- She's already embarrassed her new \$1,000 iPhone is ruined, so don't add insult to injury by telling everyone she dropped it in the toilet.

iron something out (iron out something): to solve the remaining problems.

- We need to iron out the travel details for our trip by this weekend.
- Fortunately, we were able to iron out our difficulties with the supplier.

to take issue with someone / something: to disagree with someone or something.

- I take issue with fanatical protesters who disrupt events.
- Our delegation takes issue with amendment A and proposes the following wording instead.

jam packed: very crowded or full.

- The concert was jam packed with so many people it was hard to see anything.
- This green juice is jam packed with lots of vitamins and nutrients.

one's jaw drops (open): to show great surprise.

- When our son saw that we bought him a new car for his birthday, his jaw dropped open.
- My jaw dropped when I saw the skimpy outfit my daughter planned to wear to the prom.

jerk someone around: to lie and try to deceive someone about something.

- I thought my boyfriend was serious about our relationship but he was just jerking me around and never planned to marry me.
- Are you sure the mechanic isn't jerking you around? He's had your car for almost a week.

jot something down (jot down something): write something quickly.

- Grab a pencil and jot down this number for me.
- Luckily, I had a pen in my purse and I was able to jot a description of the thief down on a napkin. It was very helpful for the police who interviewed all of us after the robbery.

jump for joy: to be very excited and happy about something.

- When the number of my YouTube subscribers grew to 1,000 people, I was jumping for joy.
- We jumped for joy when we found out our bid for the house was accepted.

jump all over someone: to severely criticize, blame or accuse someone.

- When I was 15 minutes late coming home, my dad jumped all over me and searched my purse.
- I really regret jumping all over my new assistant when she made a small mistake in the monthly financial report.

jump to conclusions: to assume something or make a decision without carefully thinking about it.

- We found these cigarettes in your purse—but before we jump to conclusions, we wanted to talk to you.
- My boyfriend is a doctor and everyone always jumps to conclusions that he's rich.

the jury is still out: a decision still hasn't been made.

- A. "Are you going to Europe the summer?" B: "The jury's still out but I'll find out if my holiday request is approved very soon."
- We've been living in New York City for six months, but the jury is still out whether we'll stay.

just in case: if something happens.

- Just in case I'm late this evening, please take the dog out for a walk.
- I'll leave my keys with the concierge just in case you decide you want to stay at my place while I'm away.

just what the doctor ordered: the exact thing that is needed.

- Thanks so much for the scented candles—it's just what the doctor ordered.
- This two-week vacation in the Bahamas is just what the doctor ordered.

keep someone posted: to update or tell someone whatever new is happening about a situation.

- Please keep your mother and I posted during your trip and send us text messages each time you travel to a new city.
- We're keeping our clients posted about our renovations through text messaging and emails.

keep to oneself: to stay by oneself and avoid other people.

- At the gym, I keep to myself because I'm very shy about meeting new people.
- Why do you always keep to yourself at our office events? It makes you seem so unfriendly.

kick oneself: to be angry and/or annoyed with oneself.

- I could kick myself for not investing more into my retirement account when I was younger.
- We kicked ourselves for not spending more time in the smaller cities in Italy during our visit.

kick off something: to start something.

- They kicked off the meeting with a fun ice-breaking activity so everyone could get to know each other.
- The school year will kick off with a week of orientation activities for incoming freshman students.

kid around: to joke with someone.

- I really like my boss because he's not that serious and likes to kid around with all of the junior associates.
- Please stop crying. Your father was just kidding around when he said he was leaving us and joining the circus.

kill time: to do something while waiting for something/someone.

- When I was waiting for my number to be called, I killed time on Instagram and Facebook.
- Don't worry about me. If you're running late, I can kill time at the shopping mall.

out of kilter: not working properly.

- Our coffee machine was out of kilter this morning so I had to have tea instead.
- Unfortunately, the scanner is out of kilter but you can just take a photo of the form with your phone and email it to HR.

(go) under the knife: to have an operation or medical surgery.

- In Hollywood, it's completely normal for women to go under the knife for cosmetic surgery after the age of 20.
- I'm terrified of going under the knife but I don't have a choice.

tie the knot: to get married.

- We got engaged last year but we're not going to tie the knot until we graduate from school.
- I tied the knot when I was just 18 years old and I strongly recommend you wait until you're at least 25 years old.

not know what hit you: to be shocked and confused about something surprising that happens to you.

- When my husband left me two weeks after we got married, I didn't know what hit me.
- I didn't know what hit me after my 16-year-old girlfriend got pregnant. It still does not seem real two years later.

not know whether to laugh or cry: to be very upset and frustrated about something.

- When the doctor's office told me the first available appointment was five months later, I didn't know whether to laugh or cry.
- We didn't know whether to laugh or cry when our daughter "helped" us painted our kitchen with her markers.

knuckle down: to work very hard.

- It's final exam week so I've got to knuckle down and study.
- The development team knuckled down for the past two months to submit a proposal for a million-dollar grant.

a labor of love: work that you do because you really enjoy it.

- Most people hate it but organizing my closet is a labor of love for me.
- For my husband and I, weeding our garden is a complete labor of love.

fall into one's lap: to obtain or achieve something without working for it.

- I spent six months looking everywhere for a job and couldn't find anything and then the week after I stopped looking, a great job just fell into my lap.
- I'm hoping the right apartment will fall into our lap when we move to Hong Kong in the fall.

by and large: mostly, generally.

- By and large, most of the kids at my school come from extremely conservative families but there are a few very liberal-minded kids like me.
- By and large, cigarette smoking has dramatically fallen but experts are worried about the rise in vaping among high school students.

last but not least: something that's equally as important as other things even though it's the last thing mentioned.

- And last but not least, I want to thank my assistant for helping to organize this conference.
- So that's the tour of the flat. Enjoy your stay and oh, last but not least, don't forget to set the deadbolt on the door.

better late than never: it's good that something happened now even though it would have been better if it happened earlier.

- The dress arrived after the dance but better late than never—I'll wear it to the next event.
- We only arrived at the game at halftime, but better late than never.

laugh off something (laugh something off): to act or pretend as if something isn't important or doesn't bother you.

- When the kids make fun of you, I suggest you just laugh it off and they'll get bored of teasing you and bother someone else.
- My boss laughed off the criticism of his marketing idea but I could tell he was furious.

lay down the law: to instruct people about what they have to do in an authoritative way.

- My parents finally laid down the law and now none of us can use the Internet or our cell phones after 7:00 PM in the evening.
- We're going to have to lay down the law about staff taking 1-2 hour lunch breaks.

lay somebody off (lay off someone): to end a worker's job (usually because of economic difficulties).

- I heard General Electric is going to lay off 1,000 workers this week.
- When I got laid off, I felt so depressed and embarrassed I didn't leave my house for a few months.

leaf through something: to turn the pages of a book, magazine or other written material, briefly looking at the pages.

- When I was waiting for the doctor, I leafed through several magazines and found an interesting article about traveling by train through Switzerland.
- My husband found a \$100 bill when he was leafing through a brochure at the bank.

turn over a new leaf: to behave in a different way (usually an improved or better way).

- Every year on January 1st, people try to turn over a new leaf ... and then stop trying after just a week.
- After I had a heart attack, I had to turn over a new leaf and begin to eat better and exercise regularly.

lean over backwards: to try very hard to do something.

- I leaned over backwards this semester to get good grades but I didn't improve as much as I wanted.
- You'll have to lean over backwards during your unpaid internship to get hired at that company.

(grow) by leaps and bounds: to grow a lot very quickly.

- This summer it has rained so much that our grass is growing by leaps and bounds.
- My Spanish improved by leaps and bounds when I was studying in Mexico this summer.

leave someone alone: to not bother or annoy someone.

- Your daddy is in the study right now so please leave him alone and let him work.
- I wish these telemarketers would stop calling and leave us alone.

leave something open: to keep something possible or available.

- Can you please leave the 15th-16th of December open for a possible management meeting?
- We want to leave the itinerary open for now while we do more research on the exact places we want to visit.

leave something to be desired: to not be as good as you want it to be.

- It's a beautiful apartment but the neighborhood leaves a lot to be desired.
- The main course was delicious but the dessert left a lot to be desired.

make believe: to pretend.

- When I was a kid, I used to make believe I was a dog and I even ate from my dog's dish a few times.
- I asked my kids what they were arguing about and they said they were make believing they were married like my husband and I.

make do: to use the things that you have, even though it is not what you want or need.

- The photocopier jammed so we will just have to make do with the copies that we have.
- We tried to make do with just one car but now that our kids have after school activities, it's no longer feasible.

make it up to someone: to do something nice or good to compensate for something you did wrong or failed to do.

- I'm sorry I missed your softball game. I'll make it up to you by taking your team out for ice cream after your next game.
- This new diamond bracelet is my husband's way of making it up to me for forgetting our anniversary.

make someone sick: to make someone appalled, shocked or disgusted.

- I can't believe you ate that entire bucket of fried chicken—you make me sick.
- Listening to my sister talk to her boyfriend in her whiny baby voice makes me so sick.

put something on the map: to make something famous.

- This is the song and video that put Britney Spears on the map.
- Unfortunately, the mass shooting at my high school is what put our small town on the map.

hit the mark: to be correct, to reach a goal or be successful.

- I hope to hit the mark with this new technology for water purification.
- If we raise another \$10,000 today, we will hit the mark for our annual campaign with three days remaining for this fundraiser.

a matter of life and death: something that is very serious and important.

- Your father is in an important meeting. Is it a matter of life and death or can he call you back in an hour?
- Stop screaming! Reconnecting the internet is not a matter of life and death.

a matter of time: something will eventually happen or become true.

- Your paintings are incredible. It's only a matter of time before you become famous.
- Climate change is real. It's only a matter of time before we see very serious consequences.

max out (max something out): to reach the limit of something.

- I think I'll just read a book; I'm maxed out on watching television for a while.
- You've maxed out on credit cards again? It took us two years to pay our debts the last time.

mean business: to be serious about something.

- My father threatened so many times to take away my phone and nothing happened but last night he meant business and confiscated my phone.
- I mean business when I say I'm going to run a marathon in June.

(live) beyond one's means: more than one's budget or amount of money one has.

- Credit cards make it possible for so many people to live beyond their means.
- When I discovered my boyfriend was living beyond his means to impress me, it made me really sad.

meet someone halfway: to compromise with someone by doing half or a good part of what they want.

- My roommates would never meet me halfway with cleaning, so I finally got my own place.
- If you meet me halfway, I'm sure we can come to an agreement on the sale of the car.

make ends meet: to have enough money to pay for the basic necessities.

- After I lost my job, I didn't have enough to make ends meet so I had to sleep on my sister's couch and eat lots of spaghetti.
- When we were growing up in the Philippines, every single month we had difficulty making ends meet.

call someone names: to describe someone with rude or insulting words.

- It's really childish to call your wife names when you disagree, and it's going to harm your relationship over time.
- It's incomprehensible that the President of the United States of America calls people names every day on Twitter.

breathe down one's neck: to pressure someone by watching them closely.

- I cannot fix your phone with you breathing down my neck like this. Please come back in 30 minutes.
- Why don't you get a personal trainer? It's easier to push yourself to work out when someone's breathing down your neck.

neck and neck: at the same position or equal.

- The horses are neck and neck as they come around the last turn to the finish line.
- The final round of contestants are neck and neck after the talent portion of the beauty pageant.

if need be: if necessary.

- Just invite everyone. We can take two cars to the restaurant if need be.
- I have a scholarship for my first two years of college and I'll take out student loans after that, if need be.

in the neighborhood of something: approximately.

- He must be doing very well. I heard the salary for a partner in his firm is in the neighborhood of \$450,000 and that's not including the annual bonus.
- I think my sister weighed in the neighborhood of 300 pounds before her gastric bypass surgery.

get on someone's nerves: to annoy or bother someone.

- When our neighbor talks on the phone for hours it really gets on my nerves because we can hear everything he says.
- Please stop cracking your gum so loudly. It's getting on my nerves!

break the news: to inform someone of something bad that has happened.

- I hate to be the one to break the news but I heard they gave the position you wanted to a guy from the marketing department.
- When I broke the news that I got a job in Japan, my wife cried for hours and said she wasn't coming with me.

next to nothing: almost nothing, very little.

- Before my grandmother died, she weighed next to nothing and they kept her alive by feeding her through a tube.
- I wish I could go shopping with you but I've got next to nothing in my bank account until I get paid next Friday.

get the nod: to get approval for something.

- Yes! I got the nod from my parents to get my ears pierced.
- Did you get the nod to fly business class to the conference in Tokyo?

nose around: to try to find information about something.

- Try to nose around and find out what your brother would like to do for his birthday.
- I was nosing around my roommate's stuff and found some drugs in her desk... Now, what am I supposed to do?

make a mental note: to make an effort to remember something you don't write down on paper.

- You might want to make a mental note for the future that we also offer free delivery.
- While we were being robbed, I was making mental notes about the thief and the car he drove.

compare notes: to exchange information and opinions about something.

- We should get together and compare notes about babysitters, parks, child-friendly restaurants and stuff like that.
- Several of us compared notes after the exam and now I'm sure I failed it.

on a shoestring: with very little money or a very small budget.

- I got a second job because the stress of living on a shoestring was killing me
- When you're young, living on a shoestring really isn't that difficult.

open up: to speak honestly and freely about something personal.

- My sister opened up and told me she's very unhappy in her marriage.
- Everyone cried when the speaker opened up and told us how he lost his daughter to cancer.

keep one's options open: to wait further before making a choice.

- I made a reservation at the Hilton Hotel but we're keeping our options open and looking for a better rate somewhere else.
- I invited Sarah to prom but she told me she was keeping her options open!

out of order: not working, broken.

- This coffee machine is out of order so don't put any coins in it.
- Please don't tell me the photocopier is out of order again!

overdo it: to do something too much.

- Don't overdo it with the champagne or you'll have a terrible headache in the morning.
- Look in the mirror. I'm not a makeup artist but I think you overdid it with the rouge.

at a snail's pace: very slowly (as slow as a snail would move).

- Traffic was moving at a snail's pace so it took two hours to get home from work.
- What's wrong with the Internet? It's working at a snail's pace today.

a change of pace: to do something different than before.

- Why don't we go to a museum for a change of pace?
- I decided to bring my lunch today for a change of pace.

lead the pack: to be the person in a group who is the furthest ahead or doing the best in an activity.

- I'd like you to meet Samantha, who leads the pack in sales for our company.
- My team is leading the pack in our regional soccer division.

on the same page: to think the same way about something.

- Are we on the same page about the budget for this project or do we need to discuss it further?
- My parents and I are not on the same page about what college I'm going to.

take/go to great pains to do something: to make a lot of effort to do something.

- It took me great pains to make dinner so you're going to eat it whether you like it or not.
- Please don't go to great pains to pick me up at the airport—if it's inconvenient I'll take a cab.

pale in comparison (to/with something): to not be as good or important as something else.

- This wine pales in comparison to what we drink in France.
- The quality of these running shoes pales in comparison to my Adidas.

grease someone's palm: to give someone money to get them to do what you want.

- I guess I need to grease the hostess' palm to get a reservation at that restaurant.
- I wish I could just grease someone's palm to get accepted into Harvard.

pan out: when something happens or is successful.

- If my acting career doesn't pan out, I'm going to be a drama teacher.
- The job didn't pan out because the salary they offered was too low.

up to par: at the usual and expected standard.

- Their customer service is no longer up to par so we switched to another company.
- I'm sorry, but your singing isn't up to par with the rest of the group so we've got to find someone else.

parcel out something (parcel something out): to divide and give out portions of something to different people.

- We've got to parcel out the supplies to each department.
- When do you want to parcel the fundraising assignments out to the board of directors?

do one's part: to do the part of the activity one is responsible for doing.

- If everyone does their part and gets \$1,000 in pledges, we'll easily reach our goal.
- I always do my part and then you expect me to help you do yours—it's not fair.

part and parcel (of something): something that goes together with something else and cannot be separated from it.

- Working long hours is part and parcel of being a partner at a big law firm.
- Spending an hour driving through rush-hour traffic is part and parcel of commuting into the city from the suburbs.

to pass away: to die.

- If you want to be polite you should say, "I'm sorry to hear your father passed away," and not "I'm sorry your father died."
- It's been a hard year because both my parents passed away during the holidays.

pass the buck: to shift one's responsibility for doing something to someone else.

- You'll never be successful if you always try to pass the buck.
- My coworker tried to pass the buck again but I told my boss how many projects I'm already working on.

pass out: to lose consciousness.

- I was so tired that I passed out in front of the TV as soon as I sat down on the sofa.
- I had five glasses of wine and then passed out in the cab on the way home.

pass over someone/something: to ignore or not choose someone or something.

- For the third time, I was passed over for a promotion so I've decided to quit.
- The teacher passed over me each time I raised my hand to answer a question—I don't think he likes me.

pass up something (pass something up): to not take advantage of or reject an opportunity.

- Don't pass up any volunteer opportunities in college—even though you don't get paid, they're great experience.
- I had to pass up a great deal on airfare to Florida because I don't get paid until Friday.

a pat on the back: praise or approval.

- Don't expect a pat on the back every time you do something right.
- I got a nice pat on the back for the newsletter article I wrote.

cross one's path: to happen to someone.

- If the opportunity to work in Hollywood ever crosses my path, I would immediately accept it.
- Nothing interesting crossed my path during the month I was in Spain, so I decided to travel on to Italy a week earlier than planned.

the path of least resistance: the easiest possible way.

- Going to college after high school is the path of least resistance but I've decided to launch my own business instead.
- My whole life I've taken the path of least resistance so no wonder I'm bored and hopeless.

give someone pause: to make someone stop and carefully think about something.

- Your comments that I'm always so negative really gave me pause and I realized you're right.
- I hope this performance review will give my assistant pause and get him to be more serious about his work.

(in) a quandary: in a situation where you are confused and don't know what to do.

- He's in a quandary about whether to spend \$100,000 on business school or just try to start his own business and learn from experience.
- I'm in a quandary about whether to tell my mom her pants make her look fat.

in close quarters: being together with others in a small space.

- After having my own room and bathroom my whole life it's been challenging to live in close quarters with roommates at the dorm.
- It's been difficult for everyone to live in close quarters during the Coronavirus pandemic.

out of the question: impossible; not to be considered.

- My parents said a trip to Europe is out of the question until I'm 18 years old.
- I was suspended from school so I guess going out this weekend is out of the question.

pop the question: to propose marriage (ask someone to marry).

- I need to think of a really romantic way to pop the question to my girlfriend.
- Sadly, my girlfriend thought I was going to pop the question when we traveled to Paris, so she was very disappointed after we returned home from the trip.

on someone's radar: in someone's awareness so they can consider it.

- I'd love to ask Cindy out for a date but I'm not even on her radar.
- Someone please tell me how I can get this topic on management's radar—it's really important.

go off the rails: to be ruined by poor management.

- Everything went off the rails when the owner's son took over the company.
- Sandra's wedding plans will go off the rails if someone doesn't intervene and help her.

ramp up something: to increase the volume or amount of something.

- We need to ramp up security after someone broke into our neighbor's home.
- The government ramped up production of protective gear after the COVID-19 pandemic started.

bet the ranch: to risk everything you have to try to obtain something.

- I'm pretty certain our team will win but I wouldn't bet the ranch.
- I'd bet the ranch her daughter could be a fashion model with her unique look.

pull rank: to use the power of your job or position to get what you want.

- My business partner pulled rank and took the invitation to go to the Gala.
- Your boss tried to pull rank and take the pen I got you but I was careful to have your name engraved on it.

a king's ransom: a large amount of money.

- It would take a king's ransom to purchase a mansion like that.
- Don't laugh—she makes a king's ransom selling clothing for dogs.

smell a rat: to have a feeling something is wrong.

- I've got five kids so I smell a rat whenever it gets really quiet at my house.
- I smelled a rat when my girlfriend said her ex-boyfriend was just calling to say hello.

rattle off something (rattle something off): to quickly say something.

- I love how my boyfriend can rattle off all the scores and stats for countless Super Bowl championships but can't remember the date we met.
- I can rattle off phone numbers from 20 years ago but I don't know any of my current friends' numbers because they're all programmed into my phone and I auto-dial them.

a raw deal: unfair treatment.

- I got a raw deal with my desk and computer because I started a week later than the rest of the team.
- Did you get a raw deal or did you just except the first offer without negotiating a higher salary?

a ray of sunshine: a sign of hope.

- The inquiry from a potential client offered a ray of sunshine for my new business.
- My tax refund gave me a ray of sunshine for eliminating some of my credit card debt.

read something into something: to insert your own meaning into something instead of what was intended.

- If your boyfriend said he's tired and doesn't want to go out tonight, why do automatically read more into it?
- Please do not read something else into this performance review. We were very pleased overall but would like to see improvement in this particular area.

read between the lines: to discover hidden meaning in something someone says or writes.

- I meant exactly what I said. Why do you always try to read between the lines?
- If you read between the lines, you'll see she wants you to spend more time with the kids.

read the fine print: the important information (and often legal information).

- Does anyone really read the fine print when they load software onto their computer?
- If you read all the fine print, you'd never take any pharmaceutical medications.

rear its ugly head: to become a problem that needs to be resolved.

- The mold in the bathroom shower is starting to rear its ugly head again.
- Can you make an announcement at the staff meeting about getting to work on time? Staff tardiness is starting to rear its ugly head.

set the record straight: to tell the true facts that haven't yet been reported.

- There have been so many rumors I'm really glad you finally set the record straight.
- To set the record straight, it's not that you're overweight—he's just not interested in you because he's gay.

in the red: to be in debt.

- After two straight quarters of profits, the company went in the red in the third quarter and investors started to get nervous.
- I never buy on credit because I don't like being in the red.

roll out the red carpet: to give a special welcome to someone. (Like the red carpet at special events: e.g., movie premieres, award ceremonies, galas).

- Whenever my parents come to visit, my sweet wife really rolls out the red carpet and they love it.
- Let's schedule a planning meeting—we need to roll out the red carpet for the speakers at this conference.

reel off something (reel something off): to say or do things very quickly one after another.

- She reeled the figures off so quickly everyone knew she'd prepared well for the presentation.
- I used to be able to reel off all the names of the presidents and vice presidents but now I can only remember a few of them.

reflect on something: to carefully think about something.

- Perhaps you should stop and reflect on everything you did the past semester before blaming your "awful" professor for your terrible grade.
- Whenever I board an airplane, I get nervous and reflect on how precious life is.

take over the reins: to take over control of something.

- Office morale improved drastically after the new director took over the reins.
- I hope the economy will improve when the next president takes over the reins.

on the rocks: when a relationship is having problems (especially a romantic relationship).

- My girlfriend and I were already on the rocks when I met Janie. Otherwise, I don't think I would have even noticed her.
- Our marriage is on the rocks again but my husband refuses to go to marriage counseling.

back in the saddle: doing something that you had stopped doing for a while.

- I started working out at the gym again and it feels great to be back in the saddle.
- Don't worry, it's just an ankle sprain—you'll be back in the saddle playing tennis in a couple of weeks.

safe and sound: not hurt or injured.

- My cat disappeared for two days and I was so worried but today she showed up safe and sound.
- Drive safely, and when you get home don't forget to call us to let us know you've arrived safe and sound.

better safe than sorry: it is more desirable to be careful than to risk a bad result.

- Insurance is expensive but when you're traveling internationally, it's better to be safe than sorry.
- Here, take this umbrella. I know you don't want to carry it but better safe than sorry.

easier said than done: talking about something is not as difficult as doing it.

- Eating healthy foods is unfortunately easier said than done.
- Sticking to a New Year's resolution is easier said than done and most people quit soon after starting.

when all is said and done: when everything has been considered.

- When all is said and done, you did your best and you can't ask yourself more than that.
- When all is said and done, we couldn't agree on the other's religion so we finally broke up.

for old times' sake: a way of doing something to remember something pleasant in the past.

- We're going to wear our old football jerseys to the game for old times' sake.
- Let's play 80's music at the party for old times' sake.

rub salt in someone's wounds: to make someone feel worse about a situation.

- My brother said I'm fat just to rub salt in my wounds when I didn't make the cheerleading squad.
- He made a huge mistake but don't say anything more to him—you'll only rub salt in his wounds.

bury (have) one's head in the sand: to ignore or refuse to think about a problem or something unpleasant.

- When his wife left him for another man, he buried his head in the sand and didn't remove his wedding band for three months.
- Dad I'm begging you to stop burying your head in the sand! That mole on your arm is growing and you need the doctor to have a look at it immediately!

have the final say: to have the authority to make a decision.

- I don't have a problem with you going but your father will have the final say.
- Everyone agreed—except my boss—and naturally she had the final say, which was no.

it goes without saying: obviously.

- It goes without saying that while we are away you should not have parties or invite a lot of friends over to the house.
- The baby is finally asleep, so it goes without saying that you should be quiet.

to say the least: an expression used to show there's more you could say about something but you're not going to say it.

- Her outfit was skimpy, to say the least.
- The lecture was so boring, to say the least.

(just) say the word: an expression used to tell someone to feel comfortable to ask if they need something from you.

- If you need any help with your homework just say the word.
- When you're feeling overwhelmed just say the word and I'll come over and babysit so you can get some rest.

scale back something (scale something back): to reduce or make the size, degree or amount of something smaller.

- We scaled back on our travel this year now that we have a baby.
- You're going to need to scale back on the amount of salt you consume and increase vegetables in your diet.

scale up something (scale something up): to increase or make the size, degree or amount of something larger.

- After we hired two more employees, we were able to scale up the number of clients we could serve.
- The furniture store scaled up to a larger showroom so they could display more of its products.

scared stiff: to be extremely frightened.

- I was scared stiff through the entire flight because there was so much turbulence.
- My daughter was scared stiff when she got arrested for shoplifting.

cause / make a scene: to be very loud in public in a way that disturbs other people.

- My two-year-old has been making a scene every time we go out so we usually stay home these days.
- Please don't cause a scene at the wedding reception this time—it's so embarrassing.

behind the scenes: quietly and discreetly so that other people don't notice.

- The president's security team is always behind the scenes ensuring his safety.
- As you use the computer, your antivirus system is working behind the scenes to prevent attacks.

have something down to a science: to be able to complete a process easily and effortlessly.

- My assistant has the production of our monthly newsletter down to a science and can complete it in just two days.
- My husband finally has the morning routine down to a science and can get the kids up and off to school without my help.

settle a/the score: to retaliate or do something to someone because they did something to hurt you in the past.

- We've got to settle a score with our rivals at the next game.
- If you try to settle the score with your brother he'll fight back and your feud will never end.

pick up the tab (for something): to pay for something.

- I can't believe my date asked me to dinner but forgot his wallet so I had to pick up the tab.
- My boss was so generous for picking up the tab for everyone at happy hour last night.

tailor-made for someone / something: to be specially made to fit or suit someone or something.

- All our private English courses are tailor-made to the individual student to help them reach their personal goals.
- Each desk and chair is tailor-made for our employees to ensure an ergonomic workstation.

go into a tailspin: to worsen very quickly.

- After I lost my scholarship, everything went into a tailspin: I couldn't afford to pay tuition, so I had to get a job, which left me with no time to study and my grades plummeted, and so on.
- When I got diagnosed with cancer, my professional life went into a tailspin but my personal life greatly improved as family and friends rallied around me.

hard to take: difficult to manage, experience or believe.

- At first, the news that I'd lost my job was very hard to take but after a week I was actually happy about it.
- Finding out my son enlisted in the military has been very hard to take and I pray nothing will happen to him.

take charge (of something): to get control over something.

- I wish someone would take charge of ordering supplies for the company because we're always out of something when we need it.
- When the new manager took charge of the department, everyone was forced to be on time in the morning.

take effect: to begin working.

- It will take six months for the new tax increases to take effect so we hope to move the company to a new state before then.
- Take two pills an hour before you go to sleep so they'll take effect by the time you get in bed.

take forever: to happen slowly or require a long time to do something.

- Let's go somewhere else—it takes forever to get served at this restaurant on Friday nights.
- I thought it would take forever to get my driver's license renewed but the whole process only took 20 minutes.

take someone aside: to bring someone to a different area to privately speak with them.

- I tried all evening to take the artist aside but everyone was also trying to talk to her.
- I was so happy when the team leader took me aside and said my project was outstanding.

take something / someone for granted: to fail to appreciate someone or something; to expect something will happen automatically.

- After I became sick, I never took my health for granted ever again.
- Don't take your most loyal fans for granted or your singing career will not last very long.

take something out on someone: to express frustration, anger, etc. at someone who didn't cause these negative feelings.

- Every time my husband has a hard day at work, he comes home and takes it out on me.
- I'm tired of you taking your frustration out on me—why don't you go to the gym and work out your stress before you come home?

take up where someone left something off: to continue doing something that someone else started.

- It was difficult to take up the project where my predecessor left off because she didn't leave any notes.
- Julie, please take up reading where Jonathan left off.

talk back: to rudely reply.

- If my children ever talked back to me like that, they'd be grounded for weeks.
- My son got detention for talking back to his teacher again.

talk someone through something: to explain something in detail or explain how to do something step-by-step.

- Could you please talk me through your CV since you graduated from college?
- Their customer service is excellent—they talked to me through the entire installation.

talk some sense into someone: to try to help someone to see a situation more realistically.

- Please try to talk some sense into him—he wants to quit college with only one semester left.
- I'm glad my parents talked some sense into me when I was thinking of spending my savings on a Porsche Carrera.

(off) on a tangent: to suddenly do or talk about something completely different.

- I hate her lectures because she continually goes off on tangents, which are boring and distracting.
- I'm sorry to interrupt, but you're going on a tangent and I'd like to finish the agenda items before we adjourn the meeting.

throw a (temper) tantrum: to become angry, upset and argumentative.

- My husband throws a temper tantrum every time I ask him to carpool the kids to soccer practice.
- Seriously, if you keep throwing temper tantrums for little things like that you won't have a boyfriend to complain about.

taper off: to gradually lessen.

- As you start to recover, we'll taper off the pain medication.
- Lots of people always join the gym in January but the number of new enrollments tapers off in mid-February.

tie the knot: to marry.

- Congratulations on your engagement! When are you tying the knot?
- We tied the knot in front of our immediate family and a small group of friends on the beach in Barbados.

under construction: being built.

- This website is still under construction.
- There's a lot of traffic on the freeway because the bridge is under construction.

under one's belt: having the experience of doing something.

- I felt a lot more confident after I got a year of teaching under my belt.
- All applicants must have a college degree and at least one year of work experience under their belts to apply for this position.

under one's nose: something easily seen or found.

- She was looking for the perfect husband for several years when she realized the man of her dreams—her next-door neighbor—was under her nose the whole time.
- I can't find my sunglasses! They're right under your nose; well actually, on top of your head!

under the table: in secret (often doing something illegal).

- Unfortunately, politicians sometimes award contracts to companies under the table.
- When we got to the restaurant there was a long line, so I slipped a \$20 bill to the hostess under the table and we were seated ten minutes later.

under the weather: feeling sick, especially sick with the flu or a common cold.

- I called in sick to work today because I was feeling under the weather.
- No, it's nothing serious, I just feel under the weather today.

until someone is blue in the face: talking for a very long time.

- I explained how to operate the machine until I was blue in the face.
- I yelled at my son for not coming home last night until I was blue in the face.

up for grabs: possible for anyone to have.

- The director just announced this month's contest and a new MacBook is up for grabs.
- There are some gently-used ski jackets up for grabs in the staff lounge if you're interested.

up the creek: in trouble or a difficult situation.

- I'm up the creek! My credit card bill is due in two days but I don't get paid until next week.
- We missed our flight and now were up the creek because there are no available seats on any flights until next Tuesday.

use up: to finish all of something until nothing remains.

- Help! Someone used up all the toilet paper and didn't replace the roll with a new one.
- I'm exhausted; I used up all my energy mowing the lawn this afternoon.

vicious circle: a set of repeating events and factors that negatively affect the next event.

- Extreme dieting always causes a vicious circle where the dieter initially loses a lot of weight but then gains back more weight than when they first started the diet.
- Lying creates a vicious circle as you have to keep telling new lies to cover the old ones.

wait and see: to wait over a period of time for news or results about something.

- I've submitted my novel to 20 publishers and now all I can do is wait and see.
- Just wait and see—you're going to love your job in a few weeks when you get used to it.

walk on eggshells: to be extremely careful around someone in order not to upset them.

- When I visit my parents, I have to walk on eggshells so now I hardly visit them.
- Everyone is walking on eggshells at my firm because the owner is visiting our office this week.

drive someone up the wall: to really bother or annoy someone.

- My secretary pops her chewing gum loudly all day and it absolutely drives me up the wall.
- Please don't play your music so loud, you know that drives your father up the wall.

go to waste: to not be used.

- Whenever the Native American Indians killed a buffalo, absolutely nothing went to waste.
- Since we moved into an apartment and have a small refrigerator, we can't buy a lot of food, so now nothing goes to waste.

waste away: to slowly become thin and weak.

- After my grandma died, my grandfather didn't want to eat and began to waste away.
- After I got cancer, I was wasting away until I began drinking high-calorie nutritious shakes.

waste one's breath: to say something that will probably be ignored.

- You could tell her that her hairstyle looks ridiculous but you'd just be wasting your breath.
- I don't waste my breath asking my kids to get off the Internet—instead I just disconnect it each night at 8 PM.

in hot water: to be in a difficult situation for doing something wrong.

- I'm in hot water for skipping classes this morning.
- You'll be in hot water if anyone notices you're watching movies at work.

muddy the waters: to make things more complicated or confusing.

- Wait a while. If you release another statement now, you'll only muddy the waters.
- Unfortunately, the results of this new survey really muddy the waters.

on the same wavelength: agreeing or having the same opinion.

- My business partner and I were on the same wavelength when we first started but now we have very different ideas about the company.
- Amazingly, we were all on the same wavelength at today's meeting.

make waves: to shock or upset people by doing something different.

- After Madonna and Lady Gaga, it's pretty hard to make waves in music anymore.
- When you go overseas next semester, try not to make waves. The world is a dangerous place these days.

by the way: an expression used in a conversation to indicate there is some additional information you want to say.

- By the way, did you hear that my sister will be home for the holidays?
- I really love your new haircut by the way.

zone out: to not pay attention to things happening around you.

- As soon as my boyfriend talks about sports, I automatically zone out.
- I could tell half the people were zoning out when our professor started talking about the Vietnam War.

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