

Front Cover

10)

# English Idioms

Catch-Phrase Come-Froms



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Class 10

# Idioms and Us

We learn English to better understand ourselves and our world. Much technology and entertainment is in English. Idioms are a good way to learn English. An idiom is a "catch-phrase" that uses a few words to explain a lot. For example, we use cc when we send emails. It stands for carbon copy from a time before computers. Black carbon sheets made a second copy. The original was handwritten or typed on a typewriter. We still use cc and blind (hidden) bcc today.

Many of the first black and white movies had exciting chase scenes at the end. This led to the idiom, "Cut to the Chase". Which means, quickly get to the main point. So I will. An English idiom from sports is, "the ball is in your court". It means it is your turn for action. It is time for you to start to learn English idioms.



carbon copy (cc)

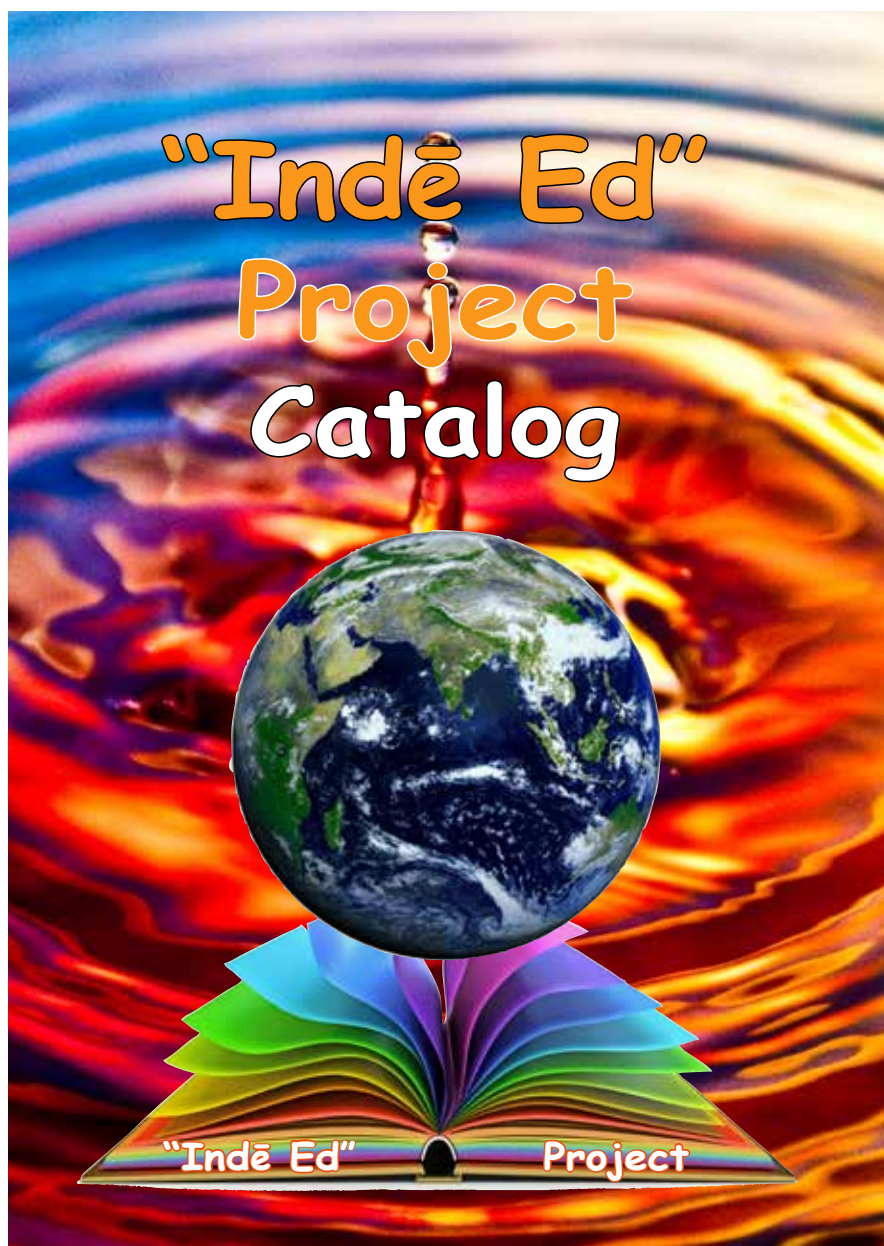


cut to the chase



ball in your court

Catalog of FREE "Indē Ed"  
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## Intro

An idiom, also called a “catch-phrase”, uses a few words to explain lots of meaning. For example, “big wig” means much more than just a large covering for the hair.

We use catch-phrases or idioms to quickly convey meanings when we talk or write. Often the origins of where the phrases came from are long since forgotten.

We keep using the idioms because they are brief, catchy and easy to understand. This book offers possible explanations of where these English Idioms came from.

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# English Idioms

## Catch-Phrase Come-Froms

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## To Recap

WHY DOES "BIG WIG" MEAN AN  
IMPORTANT OR FAMOUS PERSON?



## Big Wig

In the past, people didn't know about the health benefits of bathing. Hot water was expensive and very hard to make. There was no indoor plumbing. So you had to go to the well to get the water. Chop the wood. Make the fire and heat the water. People did not bathe very often. It was fashion for the rich to wear wigs to hide their greasy hair.

The more famous the person,  
the bigger the wig they wore.









Today, we say this phrase to mean someone famous. For example, "The big wigs walked down the red carpet".

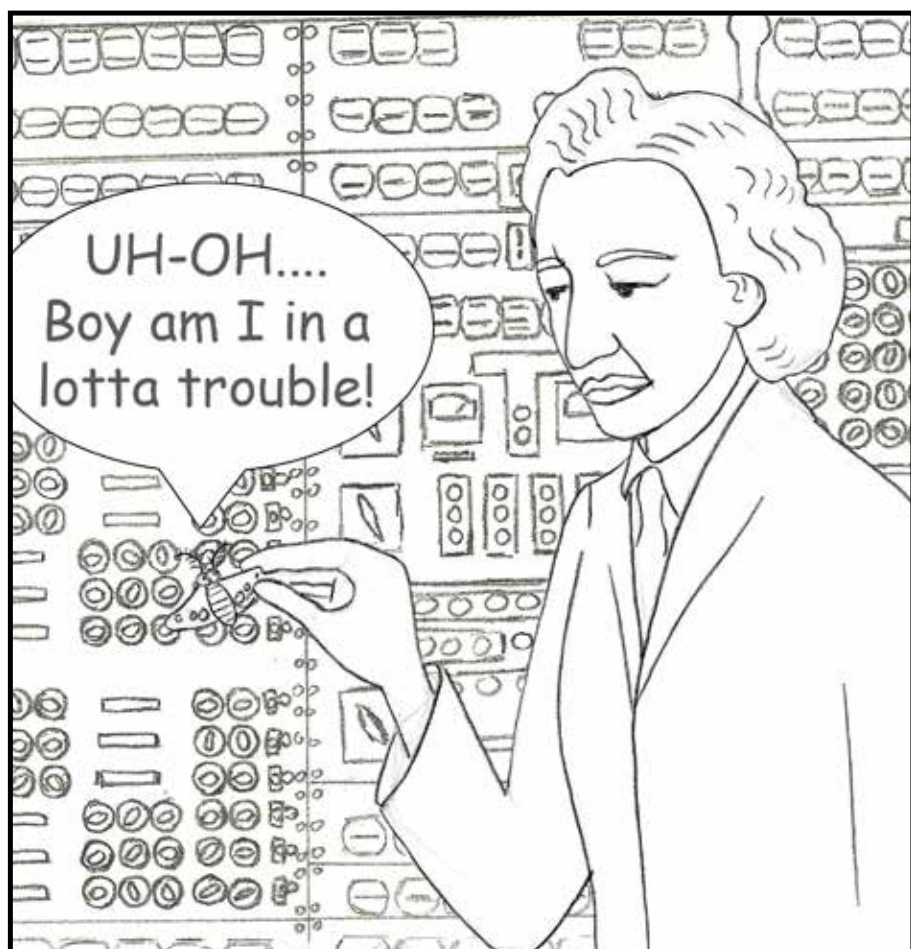
WHY DO WE SAY "BUGS" TO  
MEAN COMPUTER PROBLEMS?



## Computer Bug

The first computers were each as big as a room. One day Grace Hopper's computer stopped working. She looked for the cause. She found a moth inside the computer had caused the problem.

From then on, she called a computer problem - a "bug".





Today, we say this phrase to mean computer problems. For example, "My computer is not working right.

I think it has a bug."

## To Recap

WHY DOES "FIRED"  
MEAN TO LOSE A JOB?

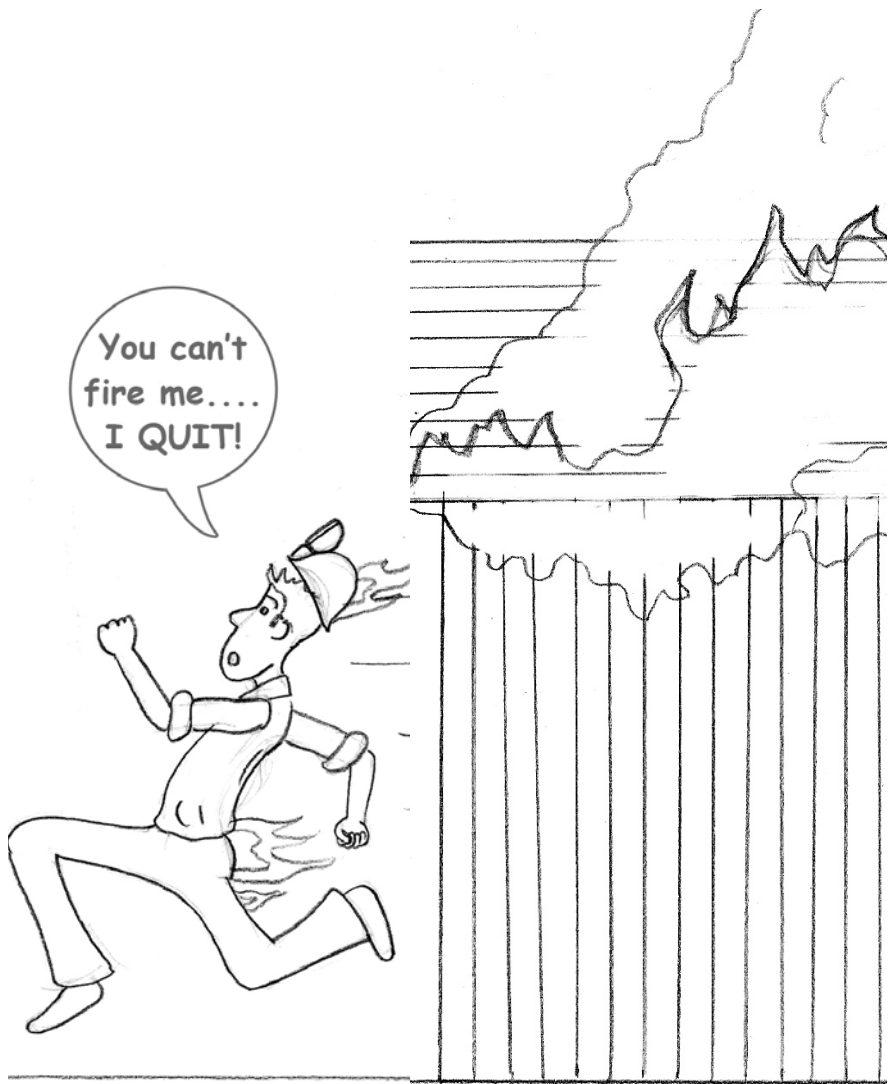


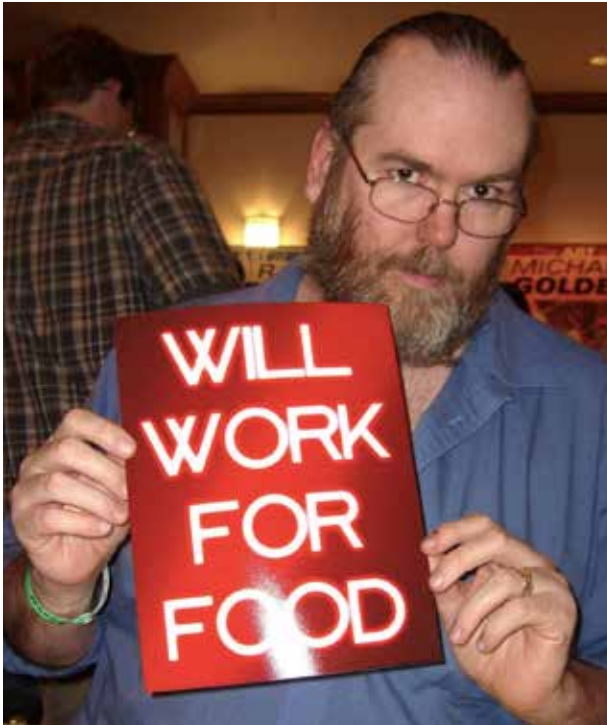
## Fired

Years ago, people used hand tools to dig metals from mines. Each miner lived in a small shack near the mine. A miner who broke the rules, like endangering others or stealing, was punished.

His shack was burned down. Once the fire was over, he could no longer work there. He had been "fired" from the job.







Today, we say this phrase to mean someone who has lost their job because of something they did.

For example, "He was always late for work, so he was fired".

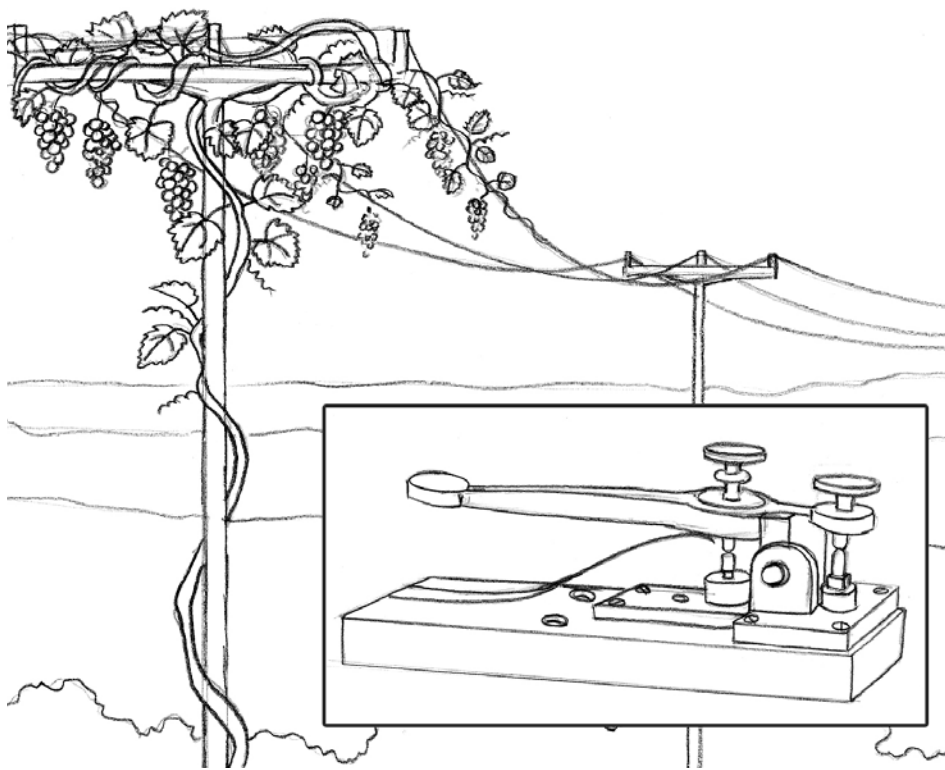
WHY DOES "HEARD IT THROUGH THE  
GRAPEVINE" MEAN TO LEARN FROM GOSSIP?



## Heard it Through the Grapevine

Before telephones, telegraphs were used like this. Tapping the telegraph caused electricity to flow in - on and off - patterns. These dots and dash of Morris Code represented each alphabet letter.

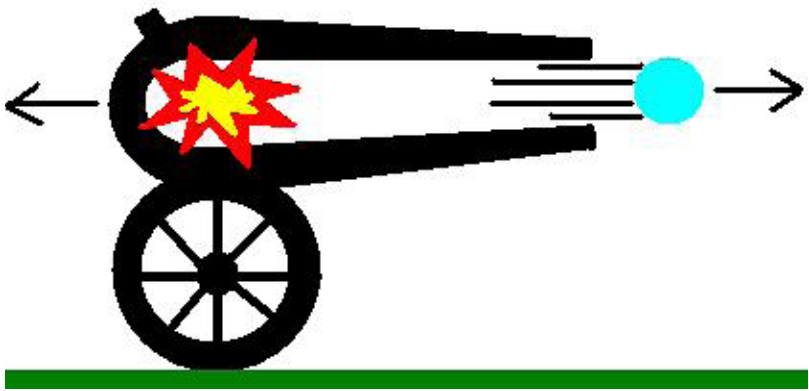
Telegraphs sent messages using long wavy wires that looked like "grapevines".





Today, we say this phrase to mean "hear something by gossip". For example, "I just heard it through the grapevine that she likes him".

WHY DOES "LOOSE CANNON" MEAN AN  
UNPREDICTABLE OR OUT-OF-CONTROL PERSON?





## Loose Cannon

In the past, wooden war ships had metal cannons. Strong ropes kept the cannons in place. If the ropes came untied, the "loose cannon" thrust backwards quickly out of control.





Today, we say this phrase to mean people who can't control themselves.

For example,  
"These athletes are loose cannons."

WHY DOES "POT HOLE"  
MEAN A HOLE IN THE ROAD?



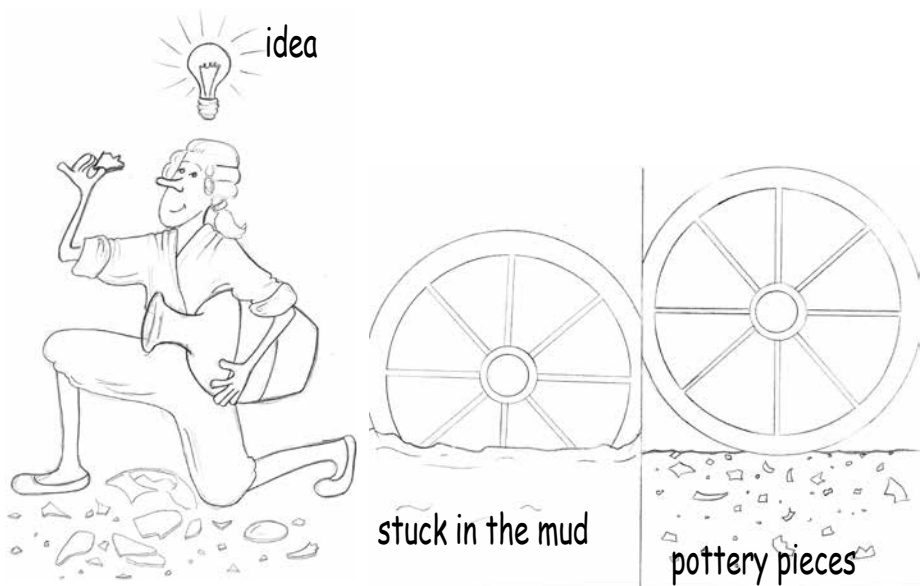
tea pot

## Pot Hole

At first, roads were not paved. They were just dirt. When it rained they were muddy and wheels got stuck. At a city in England that made lots of ceramics or potteries, there was a problem. There were mounds of broken ceramics including pots and plates.

What could all the broken pieces of pottery be used for? They cleverly spread them onto the muddy roads so tires won't sink in the mud.

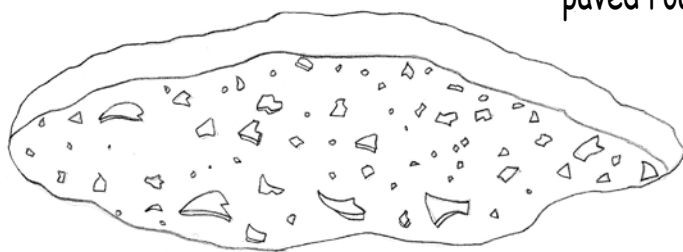
Years later, the roads were paved over. When holes wore through the tarmac, one could see the bits of pottery underneath. Local people called the holes in the road, "pot holes".



years later



paved road



pot hole



Today, we say this phrase  
to mean holes in the road.

For example, "When the snow  
melts you can see the pot holes."



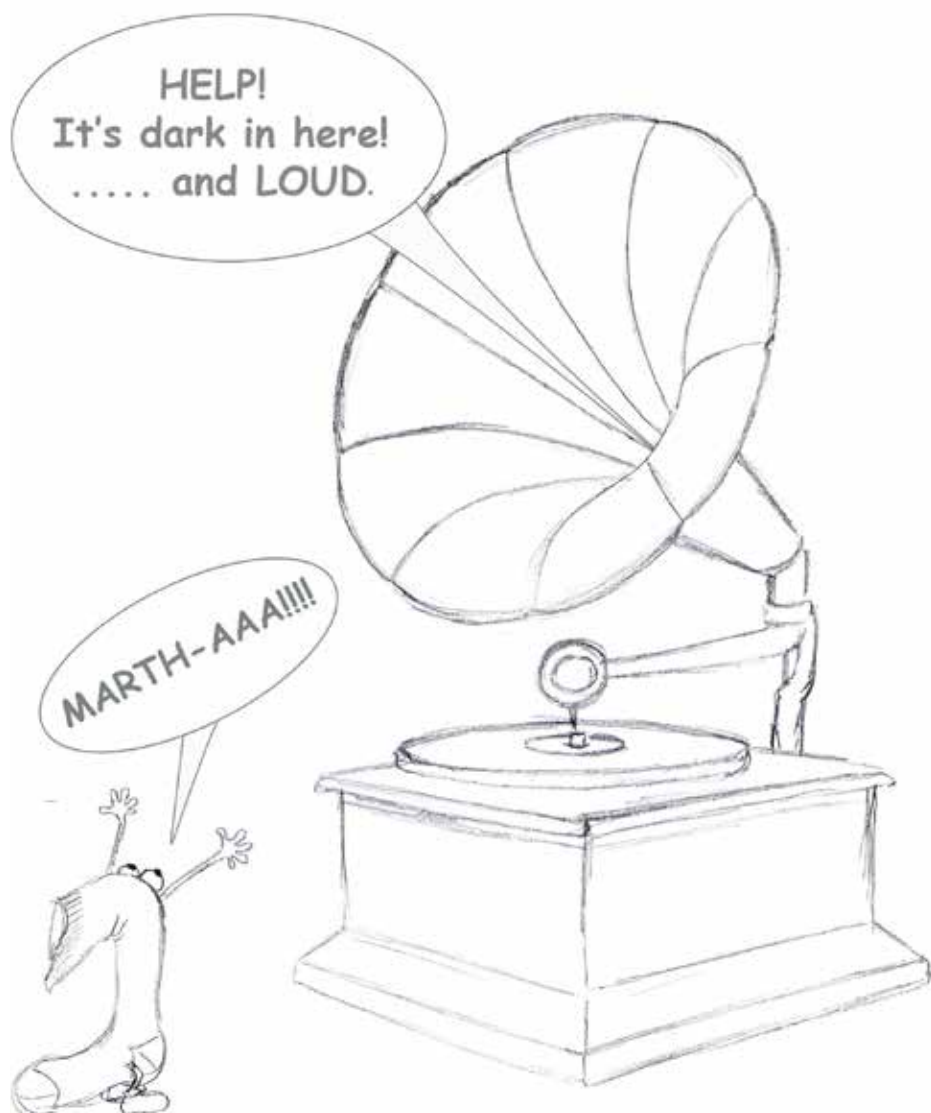
WHY DOES "PUT A SOCK IN IT"  
MEAN QUIET DOWN OR STOP DOING  
SOMETHING ANNOYING?



## Put a Sock in It!

Before CD's, records were played  
on this machine called a phonograph.  
Music came out of the horn shaped speaker.

There was no way to adjust the volume. The  
sound was made softer by putting a "sock in it".





Today, we say the phrase to mean  
stop doing something annoying.

For example,  
"that is too noisy, put a sock in it".

WHY DOES "QUACK" MEAN  
A BAD OR DODGY DOCTOR?

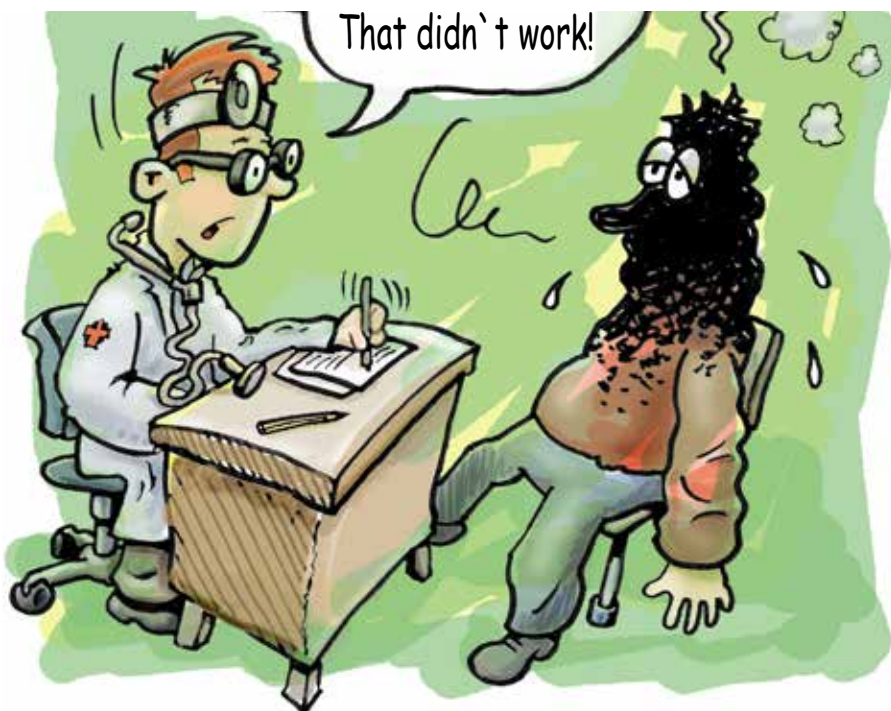


## Quack

In the past before microscopes were invented, doctors didn't know what caused diseases. People once thought that diseases like the plague were caused by bad air. Doctors dressed in outfits like this to protect themselves. The beak was full of flowers and fragrances. These doctors didn't cure the disease. The plague killed 1 out of 3 in Europe. The dodgy doctors look like ducks so people called them "quacks".



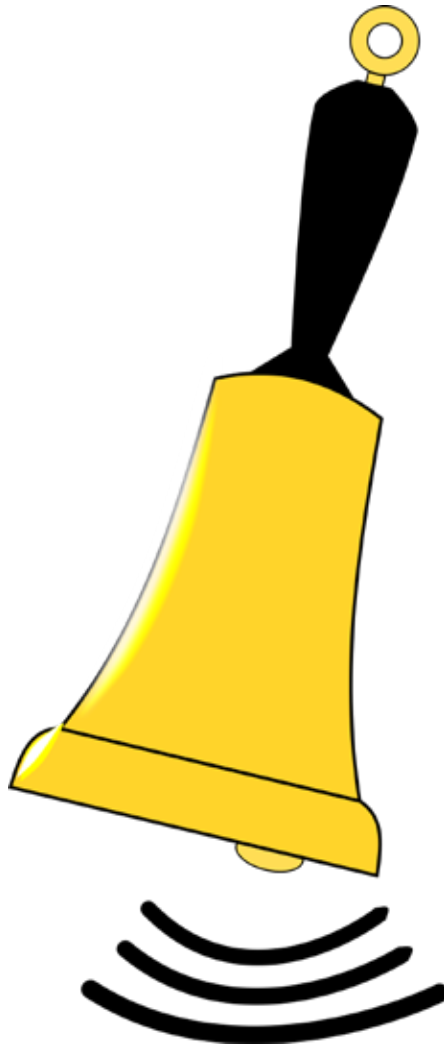




Today, we say this phrase to mean a bad doctor.

For example, "That doctor gave me the wrong medicine. I think he is a quack."

WHY DOES "SAVED BY THE BELL"  
MEAN RESCUED AT THE LAST MINUTE?

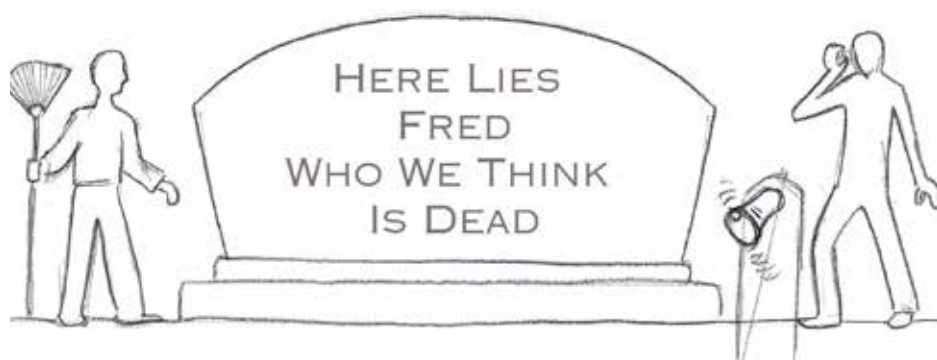


## Saved by the Bell

Long ago, people feared a sickness where a person appeared dead when they were really just asleep. People were afraid of being buried alive.

Therefore, rich people were buried with a cord tied to their toes inside the coffin. The other end was connected to a bell at the surface. People worked in cemeteries listening for ringing bells.

If the 'corpse' was actually alive, he would move his foot and ring the bell. He would be saved by the ringing bell at the last minute.



graveyard shift



## Saved by the Bell



Today, we still say the phrase  
to mean rescued at the last moment.

For example, "The struggling  
swimmer was saved by the bell."

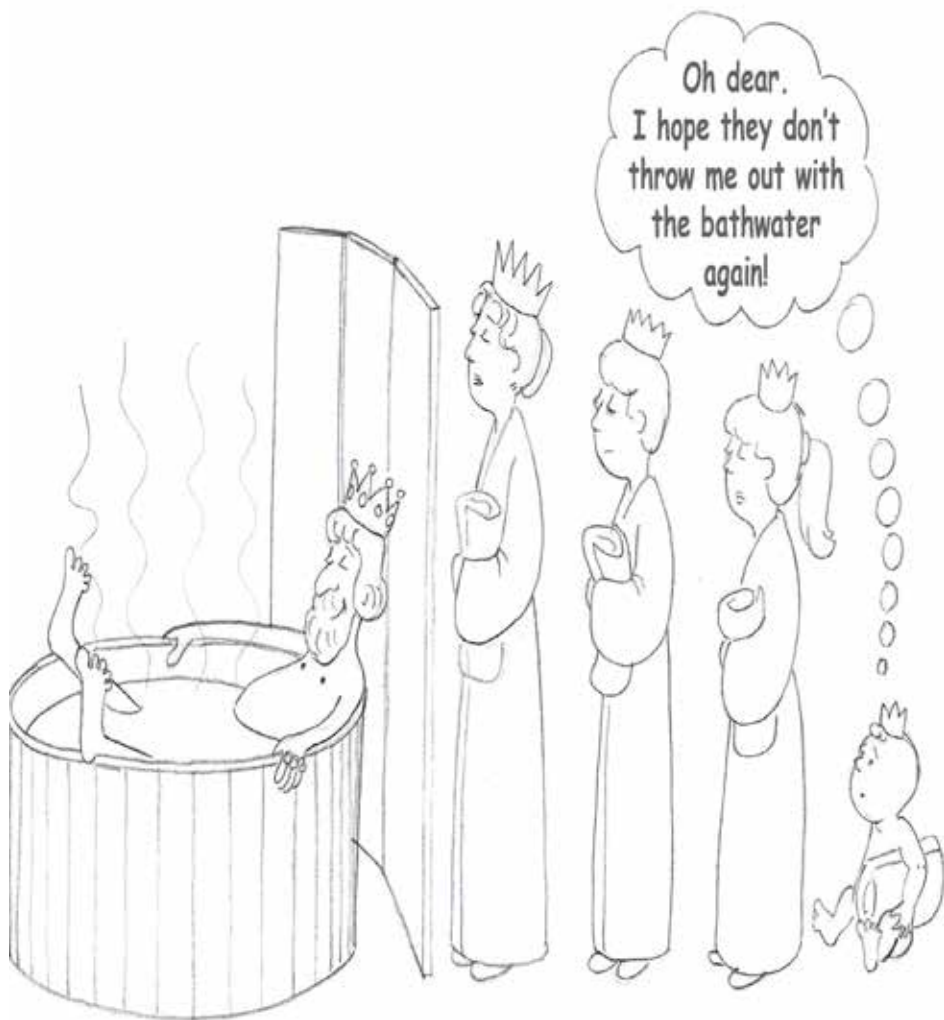
WHY DOES "THROW THE BABY OUT  
WITH THE BATH WATER" MEAN TO NOT  
APPRECIATE SOMETHING IMPORTANT OR  
THROWING OUT THE GOOD WITH THE BAD?



## Don't Throw the Baby Out with the Bathwater

In the past, people did not bathe often. In the castle, servants heated the water and poured it into the wooden bath. The king washed first followed by the Queen and then the older children.

Since all used the same water, by the time the babies were bathed the bath water was very murky. The servants had to take care not to "throw the baby out with the bath water".







Today, we say this phrase to mean  
lose the good getting rid of the bad.

For example, "Throwing aluminum  
cans into the trash is like throwing  
out the baby with the bath water".

WHY DOES "TIP" MEAN A  
REWARD FOR GOOD SERVICE?



## TIP

Before electricity, rich people communicated with hand written notes delivered by messengers.

When a message was urgent, the sender paid extra money and wrote the word TIP on the outside.

TIP is the abbreviation for the phrase "To Insure Promptitude". It means to deliver quickly.





Today, we say this phrase to mean money given for excellent service.

For example, "The outstanding waiter received a big tip".

## To Recap

WHY DOES "UNDERDOG" MEAN A PERSON OR GROUP WHO IS DISADVANTAGED AND WILL PROBABLY LOSE A COMPETITION?



top dog



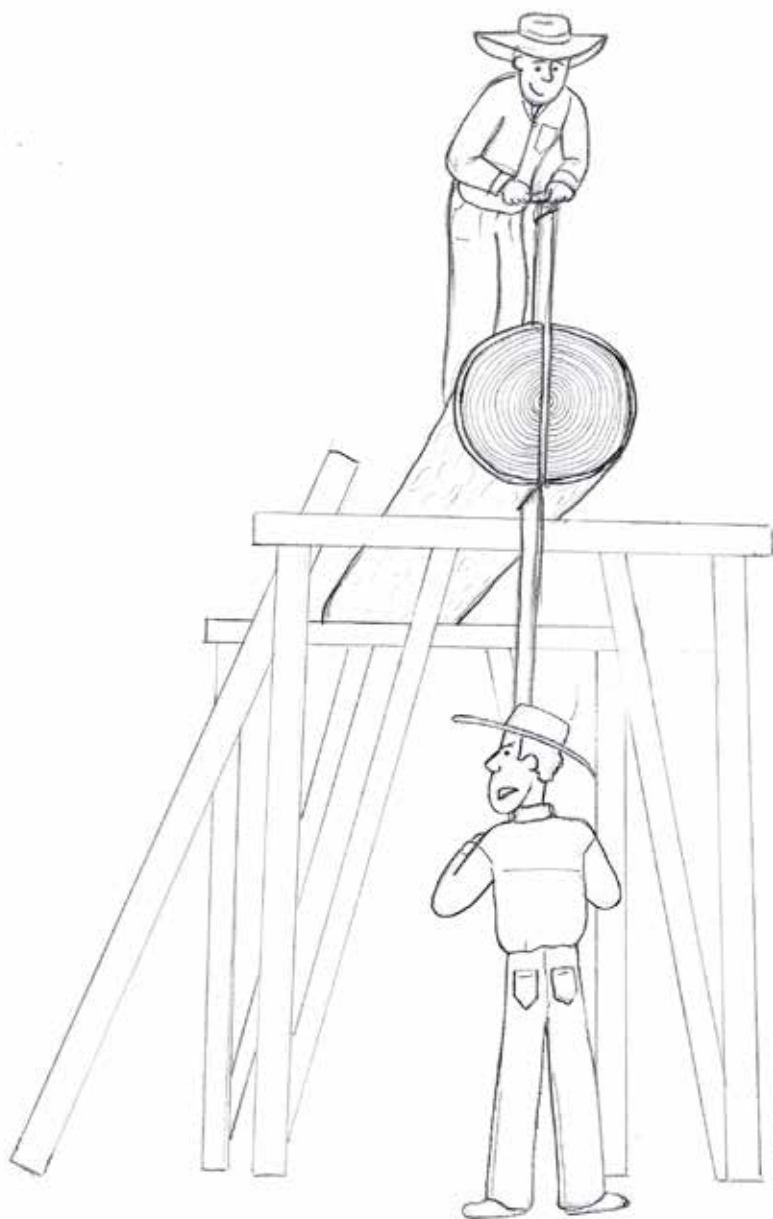
under dog

## Underdog

Before power tools, big logs were hand sawed into lumber by two people. One person was above and one below. The one underneath was covered with sawdust. He was called the "underdog".

The origin of the word may be from a pack of dogs where the top-dog bullies the weaker dogs.

# Underdog







Today, we say this phrase to mean a person or team that probably will not win.

For example, "He cheered for his sports team even though he knew they were underdogs".

WHY DOES "WAVE A RED FLAG"  
MEAN WARN ABOUT DANGER?



## Wave a Red Flag

Over a hundred years ago, horses pulled carts and carriages. When the first cars were just invented, some places like London and New York City had 'Red Flag Laws'.

The speed limit for the car was only a few miles per hour. A person "waving a red flag" had to walk in front of the car to warn the horses on the road.





Today, we say this  
phrase to warn about danger.

For example, "Scientists wave  
a red flag about global warming  
before the hurricanes arrived."

## To Recap

WHY DOES "WINDFALL"  
MEAN SUDDEN GOOD LUCK?



## Windfall

In the past, wood fueled home cooking and heating fires. This was a problem for the poor because the rich owned most of the trees. The law let poor people pick up branches which the "wind made fall" from the trees.







Today, we say this phrase to mean to suddenly get good luck!

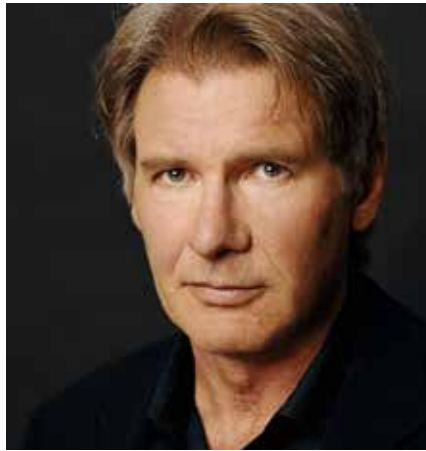
For example,  
"Winning the lottery is a windfall."

## Conclusion

Idioms or Catch-Phrases help me practice and better understand English. Idioms share much meaning in a few words. They come from past experiences. The idioms remain in use because they are catchy. They also easily explain current experiences.

New York City once had so many horses pulling carts in the city that over two million kilograms of manure were made daily. Now days, the road horses and red flags are long gone. We still talk about car engines having horsepower as a reminder of that time. Today, we still “wave red flags” and worry about “throwing the baby out with the bath water”. Let’s be optimistic. Even if we are the “underdog”, we think we will be “saved by bell” and get a “windfall”. Just need to watch out for unplanned “pot holes”.

We hope this book helps us all see more meanings in “Big Wigs, Loose Cannons, Quacks” and other Catch Phrases. There will be new idioms in the near future too.



**Big Wig**



**Red Flag**



**Computer Bug**

# Rule #10 S-V-O Sentence

Sentences have a subject,  
verb and object.(S-V-O).



① Frog said, "Ope".

**S      V      O**

The **Subject** does the **Action** to the **Object**.

# Breaker #10

## Not S-V-O Order

Some sentences are  
not in S-V-O order.



- ② "Ope, ope, ope,"  
said the friendly  
but confused frog.

O V S

# 10) English Idioms Video.



When you use English Idioms,  
makes sure others understand them.

An idiom is a few catchy words  
that carry a lot of meaning.



## **ENGLISH with 10 IDIOMS! Vook Script**

*i-1) Welcome to ENGLISH with 10 IDIOMS!*

*i-2) What are Idioms?*

*i-3) Why do we use them?*

*1-1) ONE - Computer Bugs*

*1-2) mean computer problems!*

*1-3) In the past, a computer is as big as a room.*

*1-4) One day, Grace Hopper's computer crashed.*

*1-5) She looks for the cause. She finds a moth  
that caused the problem.*

*1-6) From then on,*

*she calls a computer problem – a “bug”.*

*1-7) Today, we still call computer problems - Bugs.*

*2-1) TWO - Heard it through the grapevine*

*2-2) means to learn something from gossip!*

*2-3) Before telephones, telegraphs send messages.*

*2-4) Telegraph wires look like grapevines*

*2-5) People use idioms where  
few words have lots of meaning.*

*2-6) An example is: I just heard  
through the grapevine that she likes him.*

*2-7) Today, we still say gossip  
comes from grape vines.*

*3-1) THREE - Loose Cannon*

*3-2) means an out-of-control person!*

*3-3) In the past, wooden war ships have metal cannons.*

*3-4) Strong ropes keep the cannons in place.*

*3-5) A “loose cannon” would  
push back quickly out of control.*

*3-6) Today, we say this phrase to mean  
people who can't control themselves.*

*3-7) For example, “These fighting  
athletes are loose cannons.”*



4-1) *FOUR - Pot Holes*

4-2) *mean holes in the road!*

4-3) *Long ago, cart wheels get stuck in muddy roads.*

4-4) *Near Factories, people put pottery pieces  
onto the road.*

4-5) *Years later, the roads are paved.*

4-6) *When holes wear in the top tarmac,  
you can see pottery bits.*

4-7) *Today, we call road holes, pot holes.*

5-1) *FIVE - "Put a sock in it"*

5-2) *Means to stop talking so loud or too much.*

5-3) *Before Music Apps, records are  
played on these machines.*

5-4) *Music comes out the horn shaped speaker.*

5-5) *There is no way to lower the volume.*

5-6) *The sound is made softer by putting  
"a sock in the speaker".*

5-7) *Today, we say, "That is too noisy, put a sock in it".*

6-1) *SIX - QUACK*

6-2) *means a bad or dodgy doctor!*

6-3) *Long ago, people did Not know what causes diseases.*

6-4) *Doctors think, bad air causes diseases like the plague.*

6-5) *They wear outfits like this to protect themselves.  
The beak is full of things that smell nice.*

6-6) *These doctors don't cure the plague.*

6-7) *The dodgy doctors look like ducks so  
people call them "quacks".*

7-1) *SEVEN - "Saved by the Bell"*

7-2) *means to save at the last minute!*

7-2) *Long ago, people are afraid of being buried alive.*

7-3) *So, rich people are buried with a cord tied  
to their shoes inside the coffin.*

7-4) *The other end connects to a bell at the surface.*

7-5) *If alive, he moves his foot and rings the bell.*

7-6) *He is "saved" by the ringing bell.*

7-7) *Today, we still say this to mean  
rescued at the last moment.*





8-1) EIGHT - "Throw the baby out with the bath water"

8-2) means to not appreciate something important.

8-3) Long ago, people don't bathe often.

In the castle, servants pour hot water into the wooden bath.

8-4) The king washes first, then the Queen and older kids.

8-5) When its time for the baby's bath, the water is brown.

8-6) The servants have to take care not to  
"throw the baby out with the water".

8-7) Today, we say this phrase to mean lose  
the good getting rid of the bad.

8-8) Like, "Throwing aluminum cans into the trash  
is like throwing the baby out with the bath water".

9-1) NINE - TIP

9-2) means a reward for good service!

9-3) Before electricity, rich people hand write notes  
that messengers deliver.

9-4) When a message is urgent, the sender pays extra money.

9-5) On the note, they write, TIP.

9-6) It means "To Insure Promptitude" or quick deliver.

9-7) Today, we still say TIP to mean money  
given for good service.

10-1) TEN - WAVE a RED FLAG

10-2) means to Warn about danger!

10-3) Over a hundred years ago, horses pull carts.

10-4) When cars are invented, some cities have  
'Red Flag Laws'.

10-5) A person "waving a red flag" walks in front  
of the slow car to warn the horses.

10-6) Today, we say this phrase to warn about danger.

10-7) For example, "Scientists wave a red flag  
about climate change."

C1) To close, An Idiom is a few words with  
lots of meaning.

C2) With Idioms: bugs break computers;

C3) socks mean quiet;

C4) and grapevines talk.

C5) Understanding Idioms, Improves my English.



# Credits

Tina Bilbrey illustrated pages:

i,5,9,13,17,21,25,29,33,37,41,45,49,53,57.

## Page Description

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6 FL1 by Alan Light

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# English idiom examples.



**Big Wig**



**Red Flag**



**Hear from grapevine**



**Computer Bug**



**"quack"**

# Back Cover

## English Idioms

With this book I practice my English with idioms. Inside shows where English Catch Phrases Come From. What is interesting about them? How are they used today? Why do we 'hear from grapevines'; 'put a sock in it' and 'have computer bugs' and much more? I learn the fun and skillful way to understand English using catchy phrases.

