

Large list of English idioms from A to Z

## List of Idioms A - Z

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### A Idioms

**A big cheese-** an important or a powerful person in a group or family

**A bird's eye view-** a view from a very high place which allows you to see a large area

**A bone of contention-** something that people argue for a long time

**A cock and a bull story-** a story or an explanation which is obviously not true.

**At the crack of the dawn-** very early in morning

**A cuckoo in the nest-** someone in a group of people but not liked by them.

**A litmus test-** a method which clearly proves something

**As the crow flies-** measuring distance between two places in a straight line.

**A dead letter-** an argument or law not followed by anyone.

**At the drop of the hat-** u do something easily and without any preparation

**An early bird-** someone who gets early in the morning

**An educated guess-** a guess which was likely to get corrected

**At the eleventh hour-** be too late.

**A queer fish-** a strange person

**A wakeup call-** an event done to warn someone

**A worm's eye view-** having very little knowledge about something

**A witch hunt-** an attempt to find and punish those who have opinions that are believed to be dangerous

**At the heels of-** to follow someone

**A dish fit for Gods-** something of very high quality

**A game of two equal halves-** a sudden change in circumstances

**Afraid of one's own shadow-** to become easily frightened

**Against the clock-** to be in a hurry to do something before a particular time

**Air one's dirty laundry-** to make public something embarrassing that should be kept secret.

**All systems go-** everything is ready.

**An arm and a leg-** a large amount of money

**Appear out of now here-** to appear suddenly without warning.

**Apple of someone's eye-** someone loved very much.

**Ask for the moon-** to ask for too much.

**Asleep at the switch-** not to be alert on opportunity

**At sixes and sevens-** to be lost and bewildered

**At someone's beck and call-** to be always ready to serve

**At the bottom of the ladder-** at the lowest level

**A house of cards-** a poor plan

**At an arm's length-** to keep at a distance

**At sixes and sevens-** in disorder

**A boon in disguise-** a benefit in loss

**A bull in a China shop-** an awkward person

**A red letter day-** an important day

**A nine days wonder-** pleasure for a short time

**A bit under the weather-** falling ill

## **B idioms**

**Bad blood-** feelings of hate between two families

**Bend your ears-** to talk to someone for a very long time about something boring

**Bite your tongue-** to stop yourself from saying something because it would be better not to

**Black and blue-** full of bruises

**Blue blood-** belonging to high social class

**Be above board-** to be honest and legal

**Be bouncing off the walls-** excited and full of nervous energy

**Bow and scrap-** try too hard to please someone in a position of authority

**Brass monkey weather-** extremely cold weather

**Be tailor made-** to be completely suitable for someone.

**Break the ice-** to make more comfort or relaxed with a person whom you have not met earlier, to break the silence

**Be as clear as mud-** to be impossible to understand

**Be on cloud nine-** be very happy

**Between the devil and deep blue sea-** a type of situation where u must choose between two equally unpleasant situations

**Be in the doldrums-** not very successful or nothing new is taking place

**Beat the drum-** to speak eagerly about something you support

**Be on the edge-** to be nervous or worried about something

**Be in seventh heaven-** extremely happy

**Be at each other's throat-** two persons arguing angrily

**Batten down the hatches-** to prepare for trouble

**Back the wrong horse-** to support someone weak

**Back to square one-** to reach again to the starting point

**Back to the salt mines-** back to something that you don't want to do

**Ball of fire-** active and energetic

**Beat one's head against the wall-** to try to do something that is hopeless

**Bark up the wrong tree-** to make a wrong assumption

**Batten down the hatches-** prepare for difficult times

**Beat one's brain out-** to work hard

**Begin to see the light-** to begin to understand

**Behind closed doors-** done in secret

**Bet on the wrong horse-** to misread the future

**Bent on doing-** to be determined to do something

**Bite off more than one can chew-** to do more than one's ability

**Bite the bullet-** to face a difficult situation bravely

**Bitter pill to swallow-** an unpleasant fact that must be accepted

**Black sheep of the family-** worst member

**Blessing in disguise-** something that turns out to be good which earlier appeared to be wrong

**Blind leading the blind-** someone who does not understand something but tries to explain it to other

**Blow one's own horn-** to praise one

**Blow someone's mind-** excite someone

**Bone of contention-** subject matter of the fight

**Bring home the bacon-** to earn money to live

**Blue in the face-** exhausted and speechless

**Break the back of-** reduce the power of something

**Burn a hole in one's pocket-** to spend money quickly

**Burn the midnight oil-** to study till late of night

**Bushman's holiday-** a holiday where you spend doing same thing as you did at working days

**Button's one lip-** to keep quite

**Break a leg-** to wish good luck

## **C idioms**

**Carrot and sticks-** You use both awards as well as punishments to make someone do something.

**Cloak and dragger-** when people behave in a very secret manner

**Cards are stacked against-** luck is against you

**Crack a book-** to open book to study

**Cross a bridge before one comes to it-** worry about the future in advance

**Carry coals to new castle-** to take something to a place or a person that has a lot of that thing already

**Cast in the same mould-** to be very similar

**Change horses in midstream-** to change plans

**Cap it all-** to finish

**Cried with eyes out-** cried a lot

**Carry the can-** If you carry the can, you take the blame for something, even though you didn't do it or are only partly at fault.

**Cast a long shadow-** Something or someone that casts a long shadow has considerable influence on other people or events.

**Cat and dog life-** If people lead a cat and dog life, they are always arguing.

## D idioms

**Drive a wedge between-** to break relationship between the two

**Dances to the tune-** to always do what someone tells you to do

**Dressed up to the nines-** wearing fancy clothes

**Dragging its feet-** delaying in decision, not showing enthusiasm

**Davey Jones' locker-** Davey Jones' locker is the bottom of the sea or resting place of drowned sailors. ('Davy Jones' locker' is an alternative spelling.)

**Dancing on someone's grave-** If you will dance on someone's grave, you will outlive or outlast them and will celebrate their demise

**Dog in the manger-** If someone acts like a dog in the manger, they don't want other people to have or enjoy things that are useless to them

**Don't cry over spilt milk-** When something bad happens and nothing can be done to help it people say, 'Don't cry over spilt milk'

**Don't wash your dirty laundry in public-** People, especially couples, who argue in front of others or involve others in their personal problems and crises, are said to be washing their dirty laundry in public; making public things that are best left private.

**Donkey work-** Donkey work is any hard, boring work or task.

**Don't throw bricks when you live in a glass house-** Don't call others out on actions that you, yourself do. Don't be a hypocrite.

## E idioms

**Entering the 80th orbit-** celebrating the 80th birthday

**Eleventh hour decision-** decision that is made at the last possible minute

**End in smoke-** to bear no result

**Earth shattering-** not at all surprising

**Eat humble pie-** to apologize humbly

**Elephant in the room-** An elephant in the room is a problem that everyone knows very well but no one talks about because it is taboo, embarrassing, etc.

**Egg on your face-** If someone has egg on their face; they are made to look foolish or embarrassed

**Eye for an eye-** This is an expression for retributive justice, where the punishment equals the crime.

**Eyes are bigger than one's stomach-** If someone's eyes are bigger than their stomach, they are greedy and take on more than they can consume or manage.

## **F idioms**

**From cradle to grave-** during the whole span of your life.

**Face the music-** to accept punishment for something you have done.

**Feel the pinch-** to have problems with money.

**Fall on your own sword-** to be cheated by someone you trust.

**Feather in one's cap-** something that you achieve and proud of.

**Firing on all cylinders-** work every possible way to succeed.

**French leave-** absent without permission, to take French leave is to leave a gathering without saying goodbye or without permission.

**Fall on our feet-** If you fall on your feet, you succeed in doing something where there was a risk of failure.

**Fall on your sword-** If someone falls on their sword, they resign or accept the consequences of what they have done wrong.

**Fingers and thumbs-** If you are all fingers and thumbs, you are being clumsy and not very skilled with your hands.

**Finger in the pie-** If you have a finger in the pie, you have an interest in something.

**Flash in the pan-** If something is a flash in the pan; it is very noticeable but doesn't last long, like most singers, who are very successful for a while, then forgotten.

**Follow your nose-** When giving directions, telling someone to follow their nose means that they should go straight ahead.

**Fool's paradise-** A fool's paradise is a false sense of happiness or success

**Foot in mouth-** This is used to describe someone who has just said something embarrassing, inappropriate, wrong or stupid

**For a song-** If you buy or sell something for a song, it is very cheap



**For donkey's years-** If people have done something, usually without much if any change, for an awfully long time, they can be said to have done it for donkey's years

## **G idioms**

**Get off the hook-** free from all obligations

**Give-up the ghost-** to die

**Got the slap on the wrist-** got light punishment

**Give someone a bird-** make fun

**Got the wind up-** to be scared

**Get a raw deal-** not treated equally

**Gift of the gab-** talent of speaking, if someone has the gift of the gab, they speak in a persuasive and interesting way

**Gives cold shoulder-** to ignore

**Get your wires crossed-** If people get their wires cross, they misunderstand each other, especially when making arrangements. ('Get your lines crossed' is also used.)

**Give me five-** If someone says this, they want to hit your open hand against theirs as a Way of congratulation or greeting

**Give me a hand-** If someone gives you a hand, they help you

**Give someone a piece of your mind-** If you give someone a piece of your mind, you criticize them strongly and angrily.

**Go bananas-** If you go bananas, you are wild with excitement, anxiety, or worry

**Go tell it to birds-** This is used when someone says something that is not credible or is a lie

**Go under the hammer-** If something goes under the hammer, it is sold in an auction

**Graveyard shift-** If you have to work very late at night, it is the graveyard shift

**Grease monkey-** A grease monkey is an idiomatic term for a mechanic

## H idioms

**Have ants in your pants-** not be able to keep still because you are very excited or worried about something.

**Having a whole of a time-** to enjoy very much

**Hold one's horse-** be patient

**Have a big mouth-** one who gossips more or tells secret

**Himalayan blunder-** a serious mistake

**Have a one track mind-** think only of one thing

**Have clean hands-** be guiltless

**Have an egg on the face-** be embarrassed

**Have eyes bigger than stomach-** desiring more food than one can eat

**Heart missed a beat-** very excited

**Heart in the right place-** good natured

**Hit the nail on the head-** done the thing correctly

**Hand to mouth-** Someone who's living from hand to mouth, is very poor and needs the little money they have coming in to cover their expenses

**Have no truck with-** If you have no truck with something or someone, you refuse to get involved with it or them

**Hit the bull's-eye-** If someone hits the bull's-eye, they are exactly right about something or achieve the best result possible.

**Hold water-** When you say that something does or does not 'hold water', it means that the point of view or argument put forward is or is not sound, strong or logical. For e.g. 'Saying we should increase our interest rates because everyone else is doing so will not hold water'

**Hornets' nest-** A hornets' nest is a violent situation or one with a lot of dispute. (If you create the problem, you 'stir up a hornets' nest'.)

## I idioms

**In dribs and drabs-** in small amounts at a time

**In black and white-** to give in writing

**In the blues-** low spirited

**In cahoots with-** in a partnership usually for a dishonest reason

**If the shoe fits, wear it-** This is used to suggest that something that has been said might apply to a person

**In droves-** When things happen in droves, a lot happen at the same time or very quickly

**In the doghouse-** If someone is in the doghouse, they are in disgrace and very Unpopular at the moment.

## J idioms

**Jack Frost** - If everything has frozen in winter, then Jack Frost has visited.

**Jack the Lad** - A confident and not very serious young man who behaves as he wants to without thinking about other people is a Jack the Lad.

**Jack-of-all-trades-** A jack-of-all-trades is someone that can do many different jobs.

**Jam on your face** - If you say that someone has jam on their face, they appear to be caught, embarrassed or found guilty.

**Jam tomorrow** - This idiom is used when people promise good things for the future that will never come.

**Jane Doe** - Jane Doe is a name given to an unidentified female who may be party to legal proceedings, or to an unidentified person in hospital, or dead. John Doe is the male equivalent.

**Jekyll and Hyde** - Someone who has a Jekyll and Hyde personality has a pleasant and a very unpleasant side to the character.

**Jersey justice** - Jersey justice is very severe justice.

**Jet set** - Very wealthy people who travel around the world to attend parties or functions are the jet set.

**Jet-black** - To emphasise just how black something is, such as someone's hair, we can call it jet-black.

**Job's comforter** - Someone who says they want to comfort, but actually discomforts people is a Job's comforter.

**Jobs for the boys** - Where people give jobs, contracts, etc, to their friends and associates, these are jobs for the boys.

**Jockey for position** - If a number of people want the same opportunity and are struggling to emerge as the most likely candidate, they are jockeying for position.

**Jog my memory-** If you jog someone's memory, you say words that will help someone trying to remember a thought, event, word, phrase, experience, etc.

**John Doe-** John Doe is a name given to an unidentified male who may be party to legal proceedings, or to an unidentified person in hospital, or dead. Jane Doe is the female equivalent.

**Joe Public** - Joe Public is the typical, average person.

**Johnny on the spot** - A person who is always available; ready, willing, and able to do what needs to be done. ('Johnny-on-the-spot' is also used.)

**Johnny-come-lately** - A Johnny-come-lately is someone who has recently joined something or arrived somewhere, especially when they want to make changes that are not welcome.

**Join the club** - Said when someone has expressed a desire or opinion, meaning "That viewpoint is not unique to you". It can suggest that the speaker should stop complaining since many others are in the same position. Example: "If this train doesn't come, I'll be late for work!" "Join the club!"

**Joined at the hip** - If people are joined at the hip, they are very closely connected and think the same way.

**Judge, jury and executioner** - If someone is said to be the judge, jury, and executioner, it means they are in charge of every decision made, and they have the power to be rid of whomever they choose.

**Juggle frogs** - If you are juggling frogs, you are trying to do something very difficult.

**Jump down someone's throat** - If you jump down someone's throat, you criticise or chastise them severely.

**Jump on the bandwagon** - If people jump on the bandwagon, they get involved in something that has recently become very popular.

**Jump ship** - If you leave a company or institution for another because it is doing badly, you are jumping ship.

**Jump the broom** - To jump the broom is to marry. (Jump over the broom, jump over the broomstick, jump the broomstick are also used.)

**Jump the gun** - If you jump the gun, you start doing something before the appropriate time.

**Jump the track** - Jumping the track is suddenly changing from one plan, activity, idea, etc, to another.

**Jump through hoops** - If you are prepared to jump through hoops for someone, you are prepared to make great efforts and sacrifices for them.

**Jump to a conclusion** - If someone jumps to a conclusion, they evaluate or judge something without a sufficient examination of the facts.

**Jumping Judas!** - An expression of surprise or shock.

**Jungle out there** - If someone says that it is a jungle out there, they mean that the situation is dangerous and there are no rules.

**Jury's out** - If the jury's out on an issue, then there is no general agreement or consensus on it.

**Just around the corner** - If something is just around the corner, then it is expected to happen very soon.

**Just coming up to** - If the time is just coming up to nine o'clock, it means that it will be nine o'clock in a very few seconds. You'll hear them say it on the radio in the morning.

**Just deserts** - If a bad or evil person gets their just deserts, they get the punishment or suffer the misfortune that it is felt they deserve.

**Just for the heck of it** - When someone does something just for the heck of it, they do it without a good reason.

**Just for the record** - If something is said to be just for the record, the person is saying it so that people know but does not necessarily agree with or support it.

**Just in the nick of time** - If you do something in the nick of time, you just manage to do it just in time, with seconds to spare.

**Just off the boat** - If someone is just off the boat, they are naive and inexperienced.

**Just what the doctor ordered** - If something's just what the doctor ordered, it is precisely what is needed.

**Justice is blind** - Justice is blind means that justice is impartial and objective.

## **K idioms**

**Kick up a row** - to start a fight, to create disturbance

**Keep ones eye on the ball-** be ready for something

**Kangaroo court-** When people take the law into their own hands and form courts that are not legal, these are known as kangaroo court

**Keep body and soul together-** If you earn enough to cover your basic expenses, but nothing more than that, you earn enough to keep body and soul together.

**Keep your eye on the ball-** If you keep your eye on the ball, you stay alert and pay Close attention to what is happening

**Know which way the wind blows-** This means that you should know how things are Developing and be prepared for the future.

## **L idioms**

**Loaves and fishes-** done for material benefits

**Like a shag on a rock-** completely alone.

**Let someone slide-** neglect something

**Let the cat out of the bag-** reveal the secret

**Let nature take its course-** to allow someone to live or die naturally.

**Like a sitting duck-** totally unaware

**Lion's share-** a major share

**Left to your own devices-** If someone is left to their own devices, they are not controlled and can do whatever they want

## **M idioms**

**Make castles in the air-** plans or hopes that have very little chances of happening.

**Make a bee line for-** to go directly towards something.

**Make ones bed and lie on it-** to be responsible for what you have done and accept the results

**Meet ones waterloo-** meet ones final end

**Monkey around-** to waste time here and there

**My hands are full-** I am busy

**Make a dry face-** show disappointment

**Make a monkey of someone-** If you make a monkey of someone, you make them look foolish

**Man of his word-** A man of his word is a person who does what he says and keeps his Promises

**Many moons ago-** A very long time ago

### **N idioms**

**Nobody's fool-** one who can take care of himself

**not having a leg to stand for-** not having proof

**Never-never land-** ideal best place.

**No love lost between-** dislike

**Needle in a haystack-** If trying to find something is like looking for a needle in a haystack, it means that it is very difficult, if not impossible to find among everything around it

**New brush sweeps clean-** 'A new brush sweeps clean' means that someone with a new perspective can make great changes. However, the full version is 'a new brush sweeps clean, but an old brush knows the corners', which warns that experience is also a valuable thing

**No smoke without fire-** This idiom means that when people suspect something, there is Normally a good reason for the suspicion, even if there is no concrete evidence. ('Where's there's smoke, there's fire' is also used.)

### **O idioms**

**Once in a blue moon-** very rarely

**On the bandwagon-** doing something because others are also doing it

**Open Pandora's box-** to discover more problems

**Over the moon-** being too happy

**On its last legs-** in a bad condition and will not last long

**Old flames die hard-** It's very difficult to forget old things

**On pins and needles-** If you are on pins and needles, you are very worried about something

**On the carpet-** When you are called to the boss's office (since supposedly, they are the only ones who have carpet) and it's definitely not for a good reason, i.e., you are in trouble, something has not gone according to plan and either maybe you are responsible and/or have some explaining to do

**On the hook-** If someone is on the hook, they are responsible for something.

**Only the wearer knows where the shoe pinches-** This means that it's hard to know how much someone else is suffering.

## **P idioms**

**Pass muster-** to be approved

**Pick someone to pieces-** to criticize sharply

**Paper over the cracks-** to try to hide something

**Put the cart before the horse-** doing things in a wrong manner

**Pull up the shocks-** do things in the right manner and correctly

**Parrot fashion-** If you learn something parrots fashion; you learn it word for word

**Pay on the nail-** If you pay on the nail, you pay promptly in cash

**Pen is mightier than the sword-** The idiom 'the pen is mightier than the sword' means that words and communication are more powerful than wars and fighting

**Pick someone's brains-** If you pick someone's brains, you ask them for advice, suggestions and information about something they know about

**Pieces of the same cake-** Pieces of the same cake are things that have the same characteristics or qualities

**Play fast and loose-** If people play fast and loose, they behave in an irresponsible way and don't respect rules, etc.

**Poker face-** Someone with a poker face doesn't show any emotion or reaction so that people don't know what they are feeling

## **Q idioms**



**Quarrel with bread and butter-** Bread and butter, here, indicate the means of one's living. If a subordinate in an organization is quarrelsome or if he is not patient enough to bear the reprimand he deserves, gets angry and retorts or provokes the higher-up, the top man dismisses him from the job. So, he loses the job that gave him bread and butter. Hence we say, he quarreled with bread and butter (manager or the top man) and lost his job

**Quiet as a cat-** If somebody is as quiet as a cat they make as little noise as possible and try to be unnoticeable

**Quiet as a mouse-** If someone's as quiet as a mouse, they make absolutely no noise

**Queer fish-** A strange person is a queer fish

## **R idioms**

**Round the twist-** go crazy

**Read between the lines-** read hidden meanings

**Rack and ruin-** If something or someone goes to rack and ruin, they are utterly destroyed or wrecked

**Rain on your parade-** If someone rains on your parade, they ruin your pleasure or your plans

**Rake someone over the coals-** If you rake someone over the coals, you criticize or scold them severely

**Recipe for disaster-** A recipe for disaster is a mixture of people and events that could only possibly result in trouble

**Red carpet-** If you give someone the red-carpet treatment, you give them a special Welcome to show that you think they are important

**Red herring-** If something is a distraction from the real issues, it is a red herring

**Red letter day-** A red letter day is a one of good luck, when something special happens to you

**Reduce to ashes-** If something is reduced to ashes, it is destroyed or made useless. His infidelities reduced their relationship to ashes

**Round the houses-** If you go round the houses, you do something in an inefficient way when there is a quicker, more convenient way

**Rub shoulders-** If you rub shoulders with people, you meet and spend time with them, Especially when they are powerful or famous

**Run into the sand-** If something runs into the sand, it fails to achieve a result

## **S idioms**

**Salt on the earth-** fundamental good people

**Sands of time-** tiny amounts of time

**Shake a leg-** to go fast, hurry

**Spill the beans-** to expose a secret

**Snake in the grass-** a hidden army

**Salt on the earth-** fundamental good people

**Sands of time-** tiny amounts of time

**Shake a leg-** to go fast, hurry

**Spill the beans-** to expose a secret

**Snake in the grass-** a hidden army

**Snake in the shoes-** to be in a state of fear

**Stood to his guns-** maintained to his opinion

**showing the door-** asking someone to leave

**Song and a dance-** an excuse

**Salad days-** Your salad days are an especially happy period of your life

**Sail under false colors- Someone** who sails under false colors is hypocritical or

Pretends to be something they aren't in order to deceive people

## **T idioms**

**Threaded his way out-** walked carefully through.

**Take the cloth-** to become a priest.

**Talk turkey-** to discuss a problem with a real intension to solve it.

**Tit for tat-** an action done to revenge against a person who has done some wrong to you

**To crow over-** to triumph over someone

**to blow a fuse-** to turn someone angry

**though thick and thin-** under all conditions

**to bell the cat-** to take great risks

**To look through colored glasses-** to look the things not as they are

**Taking to a brick wall-** taking with a no response

**Turned a deaf ear-** disregarded

**Take a back seat-** choose to decrease involvement

**Tables are turned-** When the tables are turned, the situation has changed giving the advantage to the party who had previously been at a disadvantage

**Take someone under your wing-** If you take someone under your wing, you look after them while they are learning something

**Take your medicine-** If you take your medicine, you accept the consequences of something you have done wrong

**Talking to a brick wall-** If you talk to someone and they do not listen to you, it is like talking to a brick wall

**Taste of your own medicine-** If you give someone a taste of their own medicine, you do something bad to someone that they have done to you to teach them a lesson

**The apple does not fall far from the tree-** Offspring grow up to be like their parents

**Through thick and thin-** If someone supports you through thick and thin, they support you during good times and bad

## **U idioms**

**Upset the apple cart-** to create difficulty

**Under a cloud-** If someone is suspected of having done something wrong, they are under a cloud

**Under fire-** If someone is being attacked and criticized heavily, they are under fire

**Under your nose-** If something happens right in front of you, especially if it is surprising or audacious, it happens under your nose

**Up for grabs-** If something is up for grabs, it is available and whoever is first or is successful will get it

**Up to the neck-** If someone's in something up to the neck, they are very involved in it, especially when it's something wrong

**Up a river without a paddle-** If you up a river without a paddle, you are in an unfortunate situation, unprepared and with none of the resources to remedy the matter

**Uncharted waters-** If you're in uncharted waters, you are in a situation that is unfamiliar to you, that you have no experience of and don't know what might happen

**Under lock and key-** If something is under lock and key, it is stored very securely

## V idioms

**Vale of tears-** This vale of tears is the world and the suffering that life brings.

**Velvet glove** - This idiom is used to describe a person who appears gentle, but is determined and inflexible underneath. ('Iron fist in a velvet glove' is the full form.)

**Vent your spleen** - If someone vents their spleen, they release all their anger about something.

**Vicar of Bray** - A person who changes their beliefs and principles to stay popular with people above them is a Vicar of Bray

**Vicious circle** - A vicious circle is a sequence of events that make each other worse- someone drinks because they are unhappy at work, then loses their job... 'Vicious cycle' is also used.

**Vinegar tits** - A mean spirited women lacking in love or compassion.

**Virgin territory** - If something is virgin territory, it hasn't been explored before.

**Voice in the wilderness** - Someone who expresses an opinion that no one believes or listens to is a voice in the wilderness, especially if proved right later.

**Volte-face** - If you do a volte-face on something, you make a sudden and complete change in your stance or position over an issue.

**Vultures are circling** - If the vultures are circling, then something is in danger and its enemies are getting ready for the kill.

## W idioms

**Weight one's word-** be careful to what one says

**Wait for a raindrop in the drought-** When someone is waiting for a raindrop in the drought, they are waiting or hoping for something that is extremely unlikely to happen

**Walking on broken glass- When** a person is punished for something

**Wet behind the ears-** Someone who is wet behind the ears is either very young or inexperienced

**Whale of a time-** If you have a whale of a time, you really enjoy yourself

**Work your fingers to the bone-** If you work your fingers to the bone, you work extremely hard on something

**Wrench in the works-** If someone puts or throws a wrench, or monkey wrench, in the works, they ruin a plan

## **X idioms**

**X factor** - The dangers for people in the military that civilians do not face, for which they receive payment, are known as the X factor.

**X marks the spot** - This is used to say where something is located or hidden.

**X-rated** - If something is x-rated, it is not suitable for children.

## **Y idioms**

**Yah boo sucks-** Yah boo & yah boo sucks can be used to show that you have no sympathy with someone.

**Yank my chain** - If some one says this to another person (i.e. stop yanking my chain) it means for the other person to leave the person who said it alone and to stop bothering them.

**Yell bloody murder** - If someone yells bloody murder, they protest angrily and loudly, or scream in fear.

**Yellow press** - The yellow press is a term for the popular and sensationalist newspapers.

**Yellow streak-** If someone has a yellow streak, they are cowardly about something.

**Yellow-bellied** - A yellow-bellied person is a coward.

**Yen** - If you have a yen to do something, you have a desire to do it.

**Yeoman's service** - To do yeoman's service is to serve in an exemplary manner.

**Yes-man** - Someone who always agrees with people in authority is a yes-man.

**Yesterday's man or Yesterday's woman** - Someone, especially a politician or celebrity, whose career is over or on the decline is yesterday's man or woman.

**You are what you eat** - This is used to emphasise the importance of a good diet as a key to good health.

**You can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar** - This means that it is easier to persuade people if you use polite arguments and flattery than if you are confrontational.

**You can choose your friends, but you can't choose your family** - Some things you can choose, but others you cannot, so you have to try to make the best of what you have where you have no choice.

**You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink** - This idiom means you can offer something to someone, like good advice, but you cannot make them take it.

**You can say that again** - If you want to agree strongly with what someone has said, you can say 'You can say that again' as a way of doing so.

**You can't fight City Hall** - This phrase is used when one is so cynical that one doesn't think one can change their Representatives. The phrase must have started with frustration towards a local body of government.

**You can't have cake and the topping, too** - This idiom means that you can't have everything the way you want it, especially if your desires are contradictory.

**You can't have your cake and eat it** - This idiom means that you can't have things both ways. For example, you can't have very low taxes and a high standard of state care.

**You can't hide elephants in mouse holes** - means that some issues/problems/challenges cannot be hidden/concealed but have to be faced and dealt with.

**You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear** - If something isn't very good to start with, you can't do much to improve it.

**You can't make an omelette without breaking eggs** - This idiom means that in order to achieve something or make progress, there are often losers in the process.

**You can't take it with you** - Enjoy life, enjoy what you have and don't worry about not having a lot, especially money...because once you're dead, 'you can't take it with you.' For some, it means to use up all you have before you die because it's no use to you afterwards.

**You can't teach an old dog new tricks** - It is difficult to make someone change the way they do something when they have been doing it the same way for a long time

**You can't un-ring a bell** - This means that once something has been done, you have to live with the consequences as it can't be undone.

**You could have knocked me down with a feather** - This idiom is used to mean that the person was very shocked or surprised.

**You do not get a dog and bark yourself** - If there is someone in a lower position who can or should do a task, then you shouldn't do it.

**You get what you pay for** - Something that is very low in price is not usually of very good quality.

**You reap what you sow** - This means that if you do bad things to people, bad things will happen to you, or good things if you do good things. It is normally used when someone has done something bad.

**You said it!** - Used to say you agree completely with something just said.

**You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours** - This idiom means that if you do something for me, I'll return the favour.

**You what?** - This is a very colloquial way of expressing surprise or disbelief at something you have heard. It can also be used to ask someone to say something again.

**You're toast** - If someone tells you that you are toast, you are in a lot of trouble.

**You've got rocks in your head** - Someone who has acted with a lack of intelligence has rocks in their head.

**You've made your bed** - you'll have to lie in it - This means that someone will have to live with the consequences of their own actions.

**Young blood** - Young people with new ideas and fresh approaches are young blood.

**Young Turk** - A Young Turk is a young person who is rebellious and difficult to control in a company, team or organisation.

**Your belly button is bigger than your stomach** - If your belly button is bigger than your stomach, you take on more responsibilities than you can handle.

**Your call** - If something is your call, it is up to you to make a decision on the matter.

**Your name is mud** - If someone's name is mud, then they have a bad reputation.

**Your sins will find you out** - This idiom means that things you do wrong will become known.

## Z idioms

**Zero hour** - The time when something important is to begin is zero hour.

**Zero tolerance** - If the police have a zero tolerance policy, they will not overlook any crime, no matter how small or trivial.

**Zigged before you zagged** - If you did things in the wrong order, you zigged before you zagged.

**Zip it** - This is used to tell someone to be quiet.

**Zip your lip** - If someone tells you to zip your lip, they want to to shut up or keep quiet about something. ('Zip it' is also used.)