

100 English Idioms

MEANINGS AND EXAMPLES

1. Bite the bullet

Meaning: Do something hard or unpleasant bravely.

Example: I bit the bullet and told my teacher about my mistake.

2. Under the weather

Meaning: Slightly ill.

Example: I am under the weather today, so I will stay home.

3. Hit the books

Meaning: Study hard.

Example: I must hit the books tonight.

4. Cost an arm and a leg

Meaning: Be very expensive.

Example: That phone costs an arm and a leg.

5. Break a leg

Meaning: Good luck, said before a performance.

Example: Break a leg in the school play tonight!

6. A piece of cake

Meaning: Very easy.

Example: The maths quiz was a piece of cake for Riya.

7. Break the ice

Meaning: Start a talk in an awkward moment.

Example: Aman told a joke to break the ice on the first day.

8. Once in a blue moon

Meaning: Very rarely.

Example: Meera eats fast food once in a blue moon.

9. Spill the beans

Meaning: Reveal a secret.

Example: Karan spilled the beans about the surprise party.

10. Hit the nail on the head

Meaning: Say or do exactly the right thing.

Example: You hit the nail on the head when you called the plan risky.

11. Let the cat out of the bag

Meaning: Reveal a secret by mistake.

Example: Sana let the cat out of the bag about the gift.

12. Beat around the bush

Meaning: Avoid the main point.

Example: Stop beating around the bush and tell me your marks.

13. Call it a day

Meaning: Stop work for the day.

Example: We finished the poster and called it a day.

14. Cut corners

Meaning: Do a job in the easiest or cheapest way.

Example: The builder cut corners, and the wall cracked.

15. Get cold feet

Meaning: Feel too nervous to go ahead.

Example: Rohit got cold feet before his first speech.

16. Barking up the wrong tree

Meaning: Look in the wrong place or blame the wrong person.

Example: If you think I took your pen, you are barking up the wrong tree.

17. Burn the midnight oil

Meaning: Work or study late at night.

Example: Nisha burned the midnight oil before her board exam.

18. Bite off more than you can chew

Meaning: Take on too much work.

Example: Dev joined five clubs and bit off more than he could chew.

19. Back to square one

Meaning: Start again from the beginning.

Example: The file crashed, so we are back to square one.

20. By the skin of your teeth

Meaning: Only just, with a tiny margin.

Example: Ali passed the test by the skin of his teeth.

21. Cry over spilt milk

Meaning: Feel sad about something you cannot change.

Example: The match is over. Do not cry over spilt milk.

22. Add fuel to the fire

Meaning: Make a bad situation worse.

Example: His angry reply added fuel to the fire.

23. Go the extra mile

Meaning: Make more effort than people expect.

Example: Our teacher goes the extra mile to help weak students.

24. Kill two birds with one stone

Meaning: Solve two problems with one action.

Example: She walks to school and kills two birds with one stone: she saves money and gets exercise.

25. Jump on the bandwagon

Meaning: Join something because it is popular.

Example: Everyone jumped on the bandwagon when the new game launched.

26. Pull someone's leg

Meaning: Joke with someone.

Example: Relax, I am only pulling your leg.

27. Rule of thumb

Meaning: A simple guide that works most of the time.

Example: As a rule of thumb, revise each topic three times.

28. Speak of the devil

Meaning: Said when the person you discuss arrives.

Example: Speak of the devil! Here comes Tara.

29. The ball is in your court

Meaning: It is your turn to act or decide.

Example: I sent my offer. Now the ball is in your court.

30. Throw in the towel

Meaning: Give up.

Example: He threw in the towel after the third failed attempt.

31. Miss the boat

Meaning: Lose a chance by acting too late.

Example: Apply today, or you will miss the boat.

32. Hit the sack

Meaning: Go to bed.

Example: I am tired, so I will hit the sack early.

33. In hot water

Meaning: In trouble.

Example: Ravi landed in hot water for copying homework.

34. Keep your fingers crossed

Meaning: Hope for good luck.

Example: I am keeping my fingers crossed for my result.

35. Make a long story short

Meaning: Tell something in brief.

Example: To make a long story short, we missed the bus.

36. On the fence

Meaning: Unable to decide.

Example: Jia is on the fence about joining the debate team.

37. Out of the blue

Meaning: Suddenly and without warning.

Example: My cousin called me out of the blue.

38. Pay through the nose

Meaning: Pay far too much.

Example: We paid through the nose for those concert tickets.

39. Play it by ear

Meaning: Decide as things happen.

Example: We have no plan, so we will play it by ear.

40. Steal the show

Meaning: Get the most attention.

Example: The youngest dancer stole the show.

41. Take it with a grain of salt

Meaning: Do not believe it fully.

Example: Take that rumour with a grain of salt.

42. Think outside the box

Meaning: Think in a new and creative way.

Example: The team thought outside the box and built a free app.

43. Up in the air

Meaning: Not yet decided.

Example: Our trip plan is still up in the air.

44. Wild goose chase

Meaning: A useless search.

Example: The missing key turned into a wild goose chase.

45. Full of beans

Meaning: Very lively.

Example: My little brother is full of beans today.

46. Hit the road

Meaning: Start a journey.

Example: We hit the road at five in the morning.

47. Right as rain

Meaning: Perfectly healthy or fine.

Example: After a good sleep, I felt right as rain.

48. Sleep like a log

Meaning: Sleep very deeply.

Example: I slept like a log after the trek.

49. A dime a dozen

Meaning: Very common and cheap.

Example: Pens like these are a dime a dozen.

50. Go back to the drawing board

Meaning: Start planning again after a failure.

Example: The design failed, so we went back to the drawing board.

51. Hold your horses

Meaning: Wait and slow down.

Example: Hold your horses! Read the full question first.

52. In the same boat

Meaning: In the same difficult situation.

Example: We all failed the quiz, so we are in the same boat.

53. Make ends meet

Meaning: Earn just enough money for basic needs.

Example: Her parents work two jobs to make ends meet.

54. Off the hook

Meaning: Free from blame or duty.

Example: The teacher let Arun off the hook this time.

55. Take a rain check

Meaning: Say no now, but offer to accept later.

Example: I cannot come today, but I will take a rain check.

56. Bite the dust

Meaning: Fail, stop working, or die.

Example: My old phone finally bit the dust.

57. Pie in the sky

Meaning: A hope that will probably never happen.

Example: Winning without practice is pie in the sky.

58. Elephant in the room

Meaning: A big problem nobody wants to discuss.

Example: Low marks were the elephant in the room at the meeting.

59. Under your belt

Meaning: Already achieved or learned.

Example: She has two internships under her belt.

60. Cut the mustard

Meaning: Be good enough.

Example: He could not cut the mustard as team captain.

61. Fly off the handle

Meaning: Lose your temper suddenly.

Example: Dad flew off the handle when he saw the broken glass.

62. The lion's share

Meaning: The biggest part.

Example: Rhea did the lion's share of the project work.

63. A blessing in disguise

Meaning: Something good that first looks bad.

Example: Missing that bus was a blessing in disguise. I met my best friend on the next one.

64. Achilles' heel

Meaning: A weak point.

Example: Spelling is my Achilles' heel.

65. Crocodile tears

Meaning: Fake sadness.

Example: He cried crocodile tears when he lost, but he did not really care.

66. Give someone the cold shoulder

Meaning: Ignore someone on purpose.

Example: She gave me the cold shoulder after our fight.

67. Red herring

Meaning: A clue that misleads you.

Example: The muddy shoes were a red herring in the story.

68. Throw someone under the bus

Meaning: Blame someone to save yourself.

Example: He threw his partner under the bus to avoid trouble.

69. Burn bridges

Meaning: Ruin a relationship so you cannot go back.

Example: Do not burn bridges with your old employer.

70. A chip on your shoulder

Meaning: A long anger about unfair treatment.

Example: He has a chip on his shoulder about being left out.

71. Wear your heart on your sleeve

Meaning: Show your feelings openly.

Example: Mia wears her heart on her sleeve, so we always know her mood.

72. Steal someone's thunder

Meaning: Take attention away from someone else's success.

Example: Another student announced his result first and stole his thunder.

73. Skeleton in the closet

Meaning: A shameful secret.

Example: Many old families have a skeleton in the closet.

74. Hang by a thread

Meaning: Be in a very risky position.

Example: The match hung by a thread until the last over.

75. An ace up your sleeve

Meaning: A hidden advantage.

Example: The coach kept an ace up his sleeve: a fast bowler.

76. Over the moon

Meaning: Extremely happy.

Example: I was over the moon when I saw my result.

77. On cloud nine

Meaning: Very happy.

Example: She is on cloud nine after winning the prize.

78. Jump for joy

Meaning: Show great happiness.

Example: The kids jumped for joy when school closed.

79. Walk on air

Meaning: Feel light and very happy.

Example: He walked on air after his first job offer.

80. Tickled pink

Meaning: Very pleased.

Example: Grandma was tickled pink with the card.

81. Between a rock and a hard place

Meaning: Facing two bad choices.

Example: Sports or exams? Jay felt between a rock and a hard place.

82. In over your head

Meaning: In a situation too hard to handle.

Example: Maya took on three jobs and is in over her head.

83. The last straw

Meaning: The final problem that ends your patience.

Example: Late again? That is the last straw.

84. Hit rock bottom

Meaning: Reach the lowest point.

Example: After he lost his job, he hit rock bottom.

85. A tough pill to swallow

Meaning: A hard fact to accept.

Example: Failing the final was a tough pill to swallow.

86. Through thick and thin

Meaning: In good times and bad times.

Example: Tina stood by me through thick and thin.

87. See eye to eye

Meaning: Agree with someone.

Example: My brother and I rarely see eye to eye on music.

88. Bury the hatchet

Meaning: End a quarrel and make peace.

Example: The two friends buried the hatchet and shook hands.

89. Head over heels

Meaning: Deeply in love.

Example: He fell head over heels for his classmate.

90. Tie the knot

Meaning: Get married.

Example: My cousins tied the knot last winter.

91. Learn the ropes

Meaning: Learn how a job or task works.

Example: The new intern is learning the ropes this week.

92. On the same page

Meaning: Share the same understanding.

Example: Let us meet, so we are all on the same page.

93. Get the ball rolling

Meaning: Start something.

Example: Who will get the ball rolling on the group project?

94. Burn the candle at both ends

Meaning: Work or play too hard with too little rest.

Example: He burns the candle at both ends during exam week.

95. Pull an all-nighter

Meaning: Stay up all night to study or work.

Example: Priya pulled an all-nighter to finish her report.

96. At loggerheads

Meaning: In strong disagreement.

Example: The two leaders are at loggerheads over the budget.

97. A bolt from the blue

Meaning: A complete surprise.

Example: The news of the strike came as a bolt from the blue.

98. A hard nut to crack

Meaning: A difficult problem or person.

Example: The last maths question was a hard nut to crack.

99. Cry wolf

Meaning: Give a false alarm.

Example: Stop crying wolf, or no one will help you.

100. Eat humble pie

Meaning: Admit a mistake and say sorry.

Example: He ate humble pie after his claim proved false.

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