## What Is an Idiom?

Idiom Meaning: An idiom is a group of words that are used as a common expression whose meaning is not deducible from that of the literal words.

Idioms are used frequently in both written and spoken English. So let’s take a look at the most popular idioms and common idioms in the English language and what they mean.

Every language has its own **idioms** and **expression** and the English language has plenty of phrases that is useful to learn. Idioms are words or phrases that aren’t meant to be taken literally and usually have a cultural meaning behind them. Most of the English idioms you hear are offering advice’s but also contain some underlying principles and values. You have probably heard some of them, especially in TV-shows and movies, and wondered why you can’t understand these idioms even though you fully understand the words. To learn English idioms and expression it can take some time but there are some of them that are more popular than others that will come handy if you know them. When you learn English idioms and phrases you will sound more confident especially when you speak with native English speakers. If you can’t understand idioms you will not be able to understand the context. That is why we have gathered some of the most common English idioms and phrases so you will understand the true meaning of them.

Here are the most common [**English idioms**](https://englishlive.ef.com/en-gb/resources/english-language-ebook/english-idioms-tips/)and phrases that will enrich your [**English** **vocabulary**](https://englishlive.ef.com/en-gb/resources/english-language-ebook/english-vocabulary-tips/)and make you sound like a native speaker. Now with even more idioms and phrases added!

**1. ‘The best of both worlds’** – means you can enjoy two different opportunities at the same time.  
“By working part-time and looking after her kids two days a week she managed to get the best of both worlds.”

**2. ‘Speak of the devil’ –** this means that the person you’re just talking about actually appears at that moment.  
“Hi Tom, speak of the devil, I was just telling Sara about your new car.”

**3. ‘See eye to eye’** – this means agreeing with someone.  
“They finally saw eye to eye on the business deal.”

**4. ‘Once in a blue moon’** – an event that happens infrequently.  
“I only go to the cinema once in a blue moon.”

**5. ‘When pigs fly’ –** something that will never happen.  
“When pigs fly she’ll tidy up her room.”

**6. ‘To cost an arm and a leg’**– something is very expensive.  
“Fuel these days costs and arm and a leg.”

**7. ‘A piece of cake’**– something is very easy.  
“The English test was a piece of cake.”

**8. ‘Let the cat out of the bag’** – to accidentally reveal a secret.  
“I let the cat out of the bag about their wedding plans.”

**9. ‘To feel under the weather’** – to not feel well.  
“I’m really feeling under the weather today; I have a terrible cold.”

**10. ‘To kill two birds with one stone’** – to solve two problems at once.  
“By taking my dad on holiday, I killed two birds with one stone. I got to go away but also spend time with him.

”**11. ‘To cut corners’** – to do something badly or cheaply.  
“They really cut corners when they built this bathroom; the shower is leaking.”

**12. ‘To add insult to injury’** – to make a situation worse.  
“To add insult to injury the car drove off without stopping after knocking me off my bike.”

**13. ‘You can’t judge a book by its cover’** – to not judge someone or something based solely on appearance.  
“I thought this no-brand bread would be horrible; turns out you can’t judge a book by its cover.”

**14. ‘Break a leg’ –** means ‘good luck’ (often said to actors before they go on stage).  
“Break a leg Sam, I’m sure your performance will be great.”

**15. ‘To hit the nail on the head’ –** to describe exactly what is causing a situation or problem.  
“He hit the nail on the head when he said this company needs more HR support.”

**16. ‘A blessing in disguise’ –**An misfortune that eventually results in something good happening later on.

**17. ‘Call it a day’ –**Stop working on something

**18. ‘Let someone off the hook’ –**To allow someone, who have been caught, to not be punished.

**19. ‘No pain no gain’ –** You have to work hard for something you want.

**20. ‘Bite the bullet’ –**Decide to do something unpleasant that you have avoiding doing.

**21. ‘Getting a taste of your own medicine’ –**Being treated the same unpleasant way you have treated others.

**22. ‘Giving someone the cold shoulder’ –**To ignore someone.

**23. ‘The last straw’ –**The final source of irritation for someone to finally lose patience.

**24. ‘The elephant in the room’ –**A matter or problem that is obvious of great importance but that is not discussed openly.

**25. ‘Stealing someones thunder’ –**Taking credit for someone else achievements.

**To test your new-found knowledge here are some sentences to practice with. Fill in the blank!**

A) I can’t afford this purse! It \_\_\_\_\_\_\_. I won’t be able to pay my rent!  
B) His birthday was supposed to be a surprise! I can’t believe you \_\_\_\_\_. Now he knows!  
C) Ha! John has been promising to paint the house for five years…. Maybe when \_\_\_\_\_\_\_.  
D) Yeah, it’ll \_\_\_\_\_\_\_. I need to sign some papers at Jenny’s school anyway so i’ll pick her up for you too.  
E) I don’t really like going out to bars anymore. I only go \_\_\_\_\_\_\_.  
F) I’m sorry I can’t come into work today. I’m \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. I have a sore throat and runny nose.  
G) They tried \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ when installing the pipes for the house and now we have leaks only one month after purchasing it!  
H) We missed our flight to Paris because the connecting flight was late and to \_\_\_\_\_\_ they made us pay for a new ticket as if it was our fault!  
I) I can’t wait to see you perform on stage tonight! \_\_\_\_\_\_!  
J) Jane is just never on time to work, it’s really annoying. O wow, \_\_\_\_\_\_ here she comes…  
K) So we’re going to London, then Munich, then we will fly out of Athens, right? Great. I’m so glad to be traveling with someone I \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ with.  
L) Wow, she found her dream man and has now landed an amazing job. She really does have \_\_\_\_\_\_.  
M) OK, she might not be the most attractive but \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. I’m sure she is a sweetheart.  
N) I have been trying to figure this out for ages. Thanks so much, you’re right. You \_\_\_\_\_\_\_.  
O) I can’t believe that was our test. I think it was easier than some of our homework! It was a \_\_\_\_\_\_.

So how did you do? Don’t forget to try and use these idioms and phrases when practicing your English. And do let us know if you need further clarification on commonly used idioms by leaving a comment below.

***Answers:*** 6, 8, 5, 10, 4, 9, 11, 12, 14, 2, 3, 1, 13, 15, 7.

## 40 Commonly Used and Popular English Idioms

**A blessing in disguise**Meaning: A good thing that initially seemed bad

**A dime a dozen**Meaning: Something that is very common, not unique

**Adding insult to injury**Meaning: To make a bad situation even worse

**Beat around the bush**Meaning: Avoid sharing your true viewpoint or feelings because it is uncomfortable

**Beating a dead horse**Meaning: Giving time or energy to something that is ended or over

**Bite the bullet**Meaning: To get an unfavorable situation or chore over with now because it will need to get finished eventually

**Best of both worlds**Meaning: The choice or solution has all of the advantages of two contrasting things at the same time

**Biting off more than you can chew**Meaning: Not having the capacity to take on a new assignment or task that is just too taxing

**By the skin of your teeth**Meaning: Just barely making it

**Don’t judge a book by its cover**Meaning: Not judging something by its initial appearance

**Doing something at the drop of a hat**Meaning: Doing something at the moment of being asked

**Don’t count your chickens before they hatch**Meaning: Not to count on something happening until after it’s already happened

**Caught between a rock and a hard place**  
Meaning: Making a choice between two unpleasant choices

**Costs an arm and a leg**Meaning: Something that is overpriced or very expensive

**Cutting corners**Meaning: Not performing a task or duty correctly in order to save time or money

**Devil’s advocate**Meaning: To take the side of the counter-argument, or offer an alternative point of view

**Feeling under the weather**Meaning: Not feeling well, or feeling sick

**Fit as a fiddle**Meaning: Being in good health

**Getting a taste of your own medicine**Meaning: Being treated the way that you have been treating others

**Getting a second wind**Meaning: Having energy again after being tired

**Giving the benefit of the doubt**Meaning: Believing someone’s story without proof even though it may seem unbelievable

**Giving someone the cold shoulder**Meaning: Ignoring someone

**Going on a wild goose chase**Meaning: Doing something that is pointless

**Heard it on the grapevine**Meaning: Hearing rumors about someone or something

**Hitting the nail on the head**Meaning: Performing a task with exactness

**Killing two birds with one stone**Meaning: Accomplishing two different tasks in the same undertaking

**Letting someone off the hook**Meaning: Not holding someone responsible for something

**Letting the cat out of the bag**Meaning: Sharing information that was intended to be a secret

**No pain, no gain**Meaning: You have to work hard in order to see results

**On the ball**Meaning: Doing a good job, being prompt, or being responsible

**Once in a blue moon**Meaning: Something that doesn’t happen very often

**Piece of cake**Meaning: A task or job that is easy to complete

**Pulling someone’s leg**Meaning: Joking with someone

**Speak of the devil**Meaning: When the person you have just been talking about arrives

**Stealing someone’s thunder**Meaning: Taking credit for someone else’s achievements

**Straight from the horse’s mouth**Meaning: Reading or hearing something from the source

**The last straw**Meaning: The last difficulty or annoyance that makes the entire situation unbearable

**The elephant in the room**Meaning: An issue, person, or problem that someone is trying to avoid

**Throwing caution to the wind**Meaning: Being reckless or taking a risk

**Your guess is as good as mine**  
Meaning: To not know something

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