# **40 POPULAR IDIOMS AND THEIR MEANINGS**

by [Greg Secrist](https://www.bkacontent.com/author/gregsecrist/) , [GrammarSpot](https://www.bkacontent.com/category/grammarspot/)

## 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.

## 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

## 20 Familiar English Idioms

**A snowball effect**  
**Meaning:** Something has momentum and builds on each other, much like rolling a snowball down a hill to make it bigger

**An apple a day keeps the doctor away**  
**Meaning:** Apples are healthy and good for you

**Burning bridges**  
**Meaning:** Damaging a relationship beyond repair

**Every dog has his day**  
**Meaning:** Everyone gets their chance to do something big

**Fit as a fiddle**  
**Meaning:** Excellent health

**Go down in flames**  
**Meaning:** To fail in a spectacular manner

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

**Having your head in the clouds**  
**Meaning:** Day dreaming, not paying attention

**He/She is off their rocker**  
**Meaning:** Someone who is acting crazy or not thinking rationally

**It’s always darkest before the dawn**  
**Meaning:** Things always get worse before they get better

**It takes two to tango**  
**Meaning:** One person usually isn’t the only responsible party

**Like riding a bike**  
**Meaning:** Something that you never forget how to do

**Like two peas in a pod**  
**Meaning:** Two people who are always together

**Run like the wind**  
**Meaning:** To run really fast

**Through thick and thin**  
**Meaning:** Everyone experiences hard and good times

**Time is money**  
**Meaning:** Work faster or more efficiently

**Weather the storm**  
**Meaning:** Enduring a trial or hardship

**Can’t make an omelet without breaking some eggs**  
**Meaning:** You can’t make everyone happy

**You can lead a horse to water, but you can’t make him drink**  
**Meaning:** You can’t force someone to make what is seemingly the right decision

**Clouds on the horizon**  
**Meaning:** Trouble is coming or is on its way