

V&S PUBLISHERS

CONCISE DICTIONARY OF IDIOMS, PHRASES PROVERBS, SIMILES AND METAPHORS

Useful Guide for Aspirants of IAS, CAT, GMAT, GRE,
Civil Services, IELTS, TOEFL & Other Examinations

A Perfect
Reference for
Students of all
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Publisher's Note

Considering the grand success of the **EXC-EL Series (Excellence in English Language Series)** which consists of four books - *English Vocabulary Made Easy*, *English Grammar & Usage*, *Spoken English and Improve Your Vocabulary*, we have come up with a number of **English Dictionaries** pertaining to **Proverbs, Idioms, Phrases, Similes and Metaphors**. This book, *Concise Dictionary of Idioms, Phrases, Proverbs, Similes and Metaphors* is an addition to this series. Besides the above, V&S Publishers has also come out with a whole lot of *Concise Dictionaries of Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Science, Mathematics, Economics, Commerce, Management and Computers- both in English and Hindi*.

Being aware that our existence as a publishing house depends solely upon fulfilling our readers' expectations and continued patronage, we decided to come out with something that can add a spark to any conversation, while making it appear interesting. This *Combined and Concise Dictionary of Idioms, Phrases, Proverbs, Similes and Metaphors* has four distinct sections as the name indicates.

The special features of the book are it includes *meanings of hundreds of Idioms, Phrases, Metaphors & Similes* that you hear or read in English each day. The meanings are shown in italics. In order to keep it concise, this dictionary attempts to present the most commonly used *Idioms, Phrases, Proverbs, Similes and Metaphors* with suitable examples in the form of sentences.

English, as we all know is an immensely popular, attractive, articulate, rich and diverse language but the confusion between

Idioms, Phrases, Proverbs, Similes and Metaphors still remains ‘tough nuts to crack’ for readers of all ages and sections of the society, particularly for the students of schools as well as colleges.

Hence, this book has been aimed primarily to enhance and enrich the English vocabulary of our esteemed readers and to help the student faculty academically to speak as well as write fluent, error-free and excellent English.

‘To err is human’, and hence, we apologise if any errors have inadvertently crept in the book; and would be glad to rectify them with your valuable suggestions, views and comments, thus improving the content and quality of future editions.

IDIOMS



Introduction

An idiom is a combination of words that has a figurative meaning, due to its common usage. An idiom's figurative meaning is separate from the literal meaning or definition of the words of which it is made. Idioms are numerous and they occur frequently in all languages. There are estimated to be at least 25,000 *idiomatic expressions* in the *English language*.

*For Example: She is **pulling my leg**. To pull someone's leg means to trick them by telling them something untrue.*

Following is a list of Idioms with their Meanings. Read, understand and learn them as they may be of great help in your day to day conversations and in making sentences as well as in writing good English.



A

A bit too much

If something is excessive or annoying

A bridge too far

A bridge too far is an act of overreaching—going too far and getting into trouble

A chain is no stronger than its weakest link

This means that processes, organisations, etc, are vulnerable because the weakest person or part can always damage or break them.

A day late and a dollar short

If something is a day late and a dollar short, it is too little, and too late.

A fool and his money are soon parted

People who aren't careful with their money spend it quickly.

A fool at forty is a fool forever

If someone hasn't matured by the time they reach forty, they never will.

A fresh pair of eyes

A person who is brought in to examine something carefully.

A hitch in one's giddy-up

Not feeling well.

A lick and a promise

If you give something a lick and a promise, you do it hurriedly, most often incompletely, intending to return to it later.

A light purse is a heavy curse

Life is difficult when you don't have much money.

A list

Prominent and influential people who comprise the most desirable guests at a social function or gathering.

A little bird told me

If someone doesn't want to say where they got some information from, they can say that a little bird told them.

A little learning is a dangerous thing

A small amount of knowledge can cause people to think they are more expert than they really are.

A long row to hoe

Something that is a long row to hoe is a difficult task that takes a long time.

A lost ball in the high weeds

A lost ball in the high weeds is someone who does not know what they are doing, where they are or how to do something.

A lot on my plate

If you have got a lot on your plate, you are very busy and have commitments.

A month of Sundays

A month of Sundays is a long period of time.

A penny for your thoughts

A way of asking someone what they are thinking about.

A penny saved is a penny earned

Saving money is just as important as earning money- we shouldn't spend it foolishly.

A picture is worth a thousand words

A picture can often get a message across much better than the best verbal description.

A poor man's something

Something or someone that can be compared to something or someone else, but is not as good is a poor man's version.

A pretty penny

Very expensive.

A problem shared is a problem halved

If you talk about your problems, it will make you feel better.

A rising tide lifts all boats

Describes the idea that when an economy is performing well, all people will benefit from it.

A rolling stone gathers no moss

An ambitious person is more successful than a person not trying to achieve anything.

A shallow brook babbles the loudest

People who are loud and talk a lot usually have nothing of substance to say.

A slice off a cut loaf is never missed

Having sexual intercourse with someone who is not a virgin, especially when they are in a relationship.

A steal

If something is a steal, it costs much less than it is really worth.

A still tongue keeps a wise head

Wise people don't talk much.

A textbook case

A classic or common example of something.

A watched pot never boils

Some things work out in their own time, so being impatient and constantly checking will just make things seem longer.

A1

If something is A1, it is the very best or finest.

ABC

ABC means the basics of something- knowing the ABC of science, etc.

Abide by a decision

If you abide by a decision, you accept it and comply with it, even though you might disagree with it.

Abject lesson

An abject lesson serves as a warning to others.

About as useful as a chocolate teapot

Someone or something that is of no practical use.

Above and beyond

This means more than what is expected or required.

Above board

Carried out in a legal and proper manner.

Above par

Better than average or normal

Above the fold

If a news story is important, it will be in the top half of the page of a newspaper.

Above the salt

This means that something or someone has a high position.

Absence makes the heart grow fonder

When people are apart, their love grows stronger.

Accident waiting to happen

There's definitely going to be an accident or it's bound to go wrong.

Ace in the hole

A secret advantage that other people are not aware of; it can be used to one's advantage when the time is right.

Ace up your sleeve

To have something that will give you an advantage that other people don't know about.

Achilles' heel

A person's weak spot.

Acid test

Something that proves whether something is good, effective, etc, or not.

Across the board

Something that applies to everybody.

Across the pond

On the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, used to refer to the US or the UK depending on the speaker's location.

Act of God

Something like an earthquake or floods that human beings cannot prevent or control.

Act of war

An action that is either intended to start a war or that is interpreted as being sufficient cause for a war.

Actions speak louder than words

People actually do is more important than what they say-people can promise things but then fail to deliver.

Adam's ale

Water

Adam's apple

A bulge in the throat, mostly seen in men.

Add fuel to the fire

To make a bad situation worse.

Add insult to injury

To worsen a bad situation.

After the watershed

The time limit after which more controversial subjects, bad language, etc, can be shown on TV in some countries.

After your own heart

A person who thinks the same way as you.

Against the clock

To be rushed and have very little time to do something.

Against the grain

To be unwilling to do something because it contradicts what you believe in, but you have no real choice.

Age before beauty

A way of allowing an older person to do something first, though often in a slightly sarcastic way.

Agony aunt

A newspaper columnist who gives advice to people having problems, especially personal ones.

Ahead of the curve

To represent the top percentile of results that either has the advanced skills or understanding that sets one apart.

Ahead of the pack

To have made more progress than your rivals.

Ahead of time

To happen before the set time.

Air your dirty laundry in public

To reveal aspects of your private life that should really remain private, by telling a secret, arguing in public, etc.

Albatross around your neck

A problem resulting from something you did that stops you from being successful.

Alike as two peas

Identical.

Alive and kicking

Active.

All ages and stripes

A shorthand for expressing a diversity of folks in a group

All along

To have known something from the very beginning.

All and sundry

Each one and everyone.

All bark and no bite

When someone talks tough but really isn't.

All bets are off

Agreements that have been made no longer apply.

All but

To almost do something, but not completely finish it.

All cats are grey in the dark

Things are indistinguishable in the dark so appearances don't matter.

All dressed up and nowhere to go

You're prepared for something that isn't going to happen.

All ears

To be very interested in hearing about something.

All eyes on me

Everyone is paying attention to one particular subject or object.

All fingers and thumbs

Too excited or clumsy to do something properly that requires manual dexterity.

All hat, no cattle

When someone talks big, but cannot back it up.

All heart

Very kind and generous.

All hell broke loose

Chaos, confusion and trouble.

All in a day's work

Nothing special; routine.

All in your head

Imagined and not real.

All mod cons

Having all the best and most desirable features.

All mouth and trousers

Someone who talks or boasts a lot but doesn't deliver.

All my eye and Peggy Martin

Something said or written that is unbelievable, rumour.

All of the above

Everything that has been said or written.

All over bar the shouting
The outcome is absolutely certain.

All over Hell's half acre
Everywhere.

All over the map
Something that doesn't stick to the main topic and goes off on tangents.

All over the place
Something that is all over the place.

All over the shop
Something that is all over the shop.

All over the show
In a complete mess.

All roads lead to Rome
There can be many different ways of doing something.

All set
To be ready for something.

All sixes
It doesn't matter how something is done.

All skin and bones
Underweight.

All square
Nobody has an advantage or is ahead of the others.

All talk and no trousers
To talk about doing big, important things, but not taking any action.

All that glitters is not gold
Appearances can be deceptive and things that look or sound valuable can be worthless.

All the rage
Very popular or fashionable at the moment.

All the tea in China
Won't do anything no matter how much money one is offered.

All things to all people
Trying to satisfy everyone, and often ending up satisfying no one.

All's fair in love and war
Where there is conflict, people can be expected to behave in a more vicious way.

All's well that ends well
If the end result is good, then everything is good.

Almost only counts in horseshoes and hand grenades

Used in response to someone saying "almost" in a win/lose situation. "Almost is at good enough.

Always a bridesmaid, never a bride
Never manage to fulfill one's ambition—they get close, but never manage the recognition.

Ambulance chaser
A lawyer who encourages people who have been in accidents or become ill to sue for compensation.

Amen
A way of agreeing with something that has just been said.

An Englishman's home is his castle
A man's home is equal to his castle because he feels secure and at peace there.

An old flame
An old lover.

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure
It is better to try to avoid problems in the first place, rather than trying to fix them once they arise.

And all that jazz
Everything related or similar is included.

Answers on a postcard
The answer to something is very obvious or that the person would really like to hear what people think.

Ants in your pants

Agitated or excited about something and can't keep still.

Any port in a storm

An emergency any solution will do, even one that would normally be unacceptable.

Any Tom, Dick or Harry

Something that could be done by anyone.

Apple of your eye

Something or someone that is very special to you.

Apple pie order

Everything is in perfect order and tidy.

Apples and oranges

Used when people compare or describe two totally different things.

Apples for apples

A comparison between related or similar things.

Apron strings

A man who is tied to a woman's apron strings is excessively dependent on her.

Argue the toss

You refuse to accept a decision and argue about it.

Arm and a leg

Very expensive.

Armchair critic

Someone who offers advice but never shows that they could actually do any better.

Armchair quarterback

Someone who offers advice but never shows that they could actually do any better.

Armed to the teeth

To have lots of weapons.

Around the clock

Open 24 hours a day.

Arrow in the quiver

A strategy or option that could be used to achieve your objective.

As a rule

Usually done.

As one man

To do it at exactly the same time or in complete agreement.

As the actress said to the bishop

To highlight a sexual reference, deliberate or accidental.

As the crow flies

The shortest possible distance between two places.

Asleep at the switch

They are not doing their job or taking their responsibilities very carefully.

Asleep at the wheel

Not doing their job or taking their responsibilities very carefully.

At a drop of a dime

To do it instantly, without hesitation.

At a loose end

To have spare time but don't know what to do with it.

At a loss

Unable to understand or comply.

At a snail's pace

Moves very slowly.

At arm's length

A safe distance away from one.

At cross purposes

Misunderstanding each other or having different or opposing objectives.

At daggers drawn

Very angry and close to violence.

At death's door

Close to death.

At each other's throats

Fighting, arguing or competing ruthlessly.

At full tilt

Going or happening as fast or as hard as possible.

At large

Refers to a criminal who has not been found or caught.

At loggerheads

Arguing and not able to agree on anything.

At loose ends

Have spare time but don't know what to do with it.

At odds

Cannot agree with someone and argue.

At sea

Disorganised and chaotic.

At the bottom of the totem pole

Unimportant.

At the coalface

Deal with the real problems and issues, rather than sitting in a office discussing things in a detached way.

At crossroads

A point where an important decision or choice has to be made.

At the drop of a hat

To something immediately.

At the end of the day

In conclusion.

At the end of your rope

At the limit of your patience or endurance.

At the end of your tether

At the limit of your patience or endurance.

At the fore

In a leading position

At the top of the list

Of highest priority.

At the top of your lungs

Shout as loudly as you possibly can.

At the top of your voice

Shout as loudly as you can.

At your wits' end

Have no idea what to do next and are very frustrated.

Average Joe

An ordinary person without anything exceptional about them.

Avowed intent

If someone makes a solemn or serious promise publicly to attempt to reach a certain goal.

Away with the fairies

Used when someone who doesn't want to face reality and has unrealistic expectations of life.

Awe inspiring

Something or someone that amazes people in a slightly frightening but positive way.

Axe to grind

To have a grievance, a resentment and you want to get revenge or sort it out.

B

Babe in arms

A very young child, or a person who is very young to be holding a position.

Babe in the woods

A naive, defenceless, young person.

Baby boomer

Someone born in the years after the end of the Second World War, a period when the population was growing very fast.

Back burner

Being given low priority.

Back foot

At a disadvantage and forced to be defensive of your position.

Back number

Out of fashion.

Back the wrong horse

Give your support to the losing side in something.

Back to back

Directly one after another.

Back to square one

To start from the beginning again.

Back to the drawing board

To go back to the beginning and start something again.

Back to the salt mines

To return, possibly unwillingly, to work.

Back to the wall

In a difficult situation with very little room for manoeuvre.

Backseat driver

An annoying person who is fond of giving advice to the person performing a task or doing something, especially when the advice is either wrong or unwelcome.

Bad Apple

A person who is bad and makes other bad.

Bad blood

If people feel hate because of things that happened in the past.

Bad egg

A person who cannot be trusted.

Bad hair day

things are not going the way you would like or had planned.

Bad mouth

Saying negative things about someone or something.

Bad shape

In bad condition.

Bad taste in your mouth

Something wrong or bad about it.

Bad workers always blame their tools

If somebody does a job badly or loses in a game and claims that they were let down by their equipment, you can use this to imply that this was not the case.

Bag and baggage

All your possessions.

Bag of bones

Underweight.

Bag of nerves

Very worried or nervous.

Baker's dozen

13 rather than 12.

Bald as a coot

completely bald.

Ball is in your court

Up to you to make the next decision or step.

Balloon goes up

A situation that turns unpleasant or serious.

Ballpark figure

A rough or approximate number to give a general idea of something, like a rough estimate for a cost, etc.

Balls to the walls

Apply full acceleration or exertion.

Banana republic

A term used for small countries that are dependent on a single crop or resource and governed badly by a corrupt elite.

Banana skin

Something that is an embarrassment or causes problems.

Bandit territory

An area or an industry, profession, etc, where rules and laws are ignored or flouted.

Baptism of fire

A soldier's first experience of shooting.

Bar fly

A person who spends a lot of time drinking in different bars and pubs.

Bare your heart

To tell someone your personal and private feelings.

Barefaced liar

One who displays no shame about lying even if they are exposed.

Bark up the wrong tree

To make a wrong choice to ask a wrong person to follow a wrong course.

Barkus is willing

Someone is willing to get married.

Barrack-room lawyer

A person who gives opinions on things they are not qualified to speak about.

Barrel of laughs

That which is enjoyable or entertaining.

Basket case

So bad that it cannot be helped.

Bat an eyelid

Don't react or show any emotion when surprised, shocked, etc.

Bated breath

Very excited.

Bats in the belfry

Crazy or eccentric.

Batten down the hatches

Prepare for the worst that could happen to you.

Batting a thousand

To do something perfectly.

Battle of nerves

a situation where neither side in a conflict or dispute is willing to back down and is waiting for the other side to weaken.

Be all ears

very eager to hear what someone has to say.

Be careful what you wish for

If you get things that you desire, there may be unforeseen and unpleasant consequences.

Be on the pig's back

Happy; content; in fine form.

Be out in force

Present somewhere in large numbers.

Be out in left field

not to know what's going on.

Be that as it may

While you are prepared to accept that there is some truth in what the other person has just said, it's not going to change your opinions in any significant manner.

Be true blue

Genuine.

Be up the spout

Pregnant.

Beam me up, Scotty

Something someone says when they want to get out of a place or situation, meaning 'Get me out of here!'

Bean counter

An accountant.

Bear fruit

Produce positive results.

Bear market

A period when investors are pessimistic and expect financial losses so are more likely to sell than to buy shares.

Bear the brunt

Endure the worst of something bad.

Beard the lion in his own den

Used when someone confronts a powerful or dangerous rival on their territory.

Beat about/around the bush

To avoid talking about a difficult or embarrassing subject because you are worried about upsetting the person you are talking to.

Beat someone to the draw

To do something before someone else does.

Beat swords into ploughshares

spend money on humanitarian purposes rather than weapons.

Beat the daylight out of someone

Hit someone repeatedly.

Beat the rap

Escape conviction and punishment for a crime or something you have done wrong.

Beat the tar out of

To beat someone up badly.

Beat them at their own game

Use your enemy's tactics or tricks in order to win.

Beat to the punch

Act before someone and gains an advantage.

Beat your brains out

Think hard about something but cannot solve, understand or remember it.

Beating a dead horse

To convince people to do or feel something without any hope of succeeding.

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder

Different people will find different things beautiful and that the differences of opinion don't matter greatly.

Beauty is only skin deep

Appearances can be deceptive and something that seems or looks good may turn out to be bad.

Beck and call

Used when someone does everything for you, no matter when you ask.

Bedroom eyes

To have a sexy look in one's eyes.

Bee in your bonnet

A single idea or a thought that remains in one's mind.

Bee's Knees

Outstanding or the best in its class.

Beeline for

Head to a place directly.

Been around the block a few times

Someone who has had life experience relating to the topic at hand.

Been there, done that

Already experienced what is being discussed.

Before you can say Jack Robinson

To do something in a short time.

Beg the question

To assume something to be true that has not yet been proved.

Beggars can't be choosers

People who are in great need must accept any help that is offered, even if it is not a complete solution to their problems.

Behind bars

In prison.

Behind closed doors

Something that happens away from the public eye.

Behind someone's back

Do something without telling them.

Behind the curve

Behind or out of touch with current trends or developments.

Behind the eight ball

A difficult position from which it is unlikely one can escape.

Behind the times

Someone who is old-fashioned and has ideas that are regarded as out-dated.

Believe in the hereafter

A belief in the afterlife, or life after death.

Bell the cat

To perform a difficult or impossible task.

Bells and whistles

Attractive features that things like computer programs have, though often slightly unnecessary.

Belly up

Bankrupt, dead.

Below par

If something isn't up to standard, or someone isn't feeling or doing very well.

Below the belt

If someone says something that is cruel or unfair.

Below the fold

An unimportant news story.

Belt and braces

To be very cautious.

Belt and suspenders

Cautious and takes no risks.

Bend over backwards

Do everything one can to help someone.

Bend someone's ear

To talk to someone about something for a long-enough period that it becomes tiresome for the listener.

Benjamin of the family

The youngest child.

Beside the point

Not relevant to the matter being discussed or considered.

Beside oneself

Extremely angry.

Best of a bad bunch

The best that could be obtained from a list of options that were not exactly what was required.

Best of both worlds

Benefit from different things that do not normally go together.

Best thing since sliced bread

Excellent.

Bet the farm

Risk everything on something you think will succeed.

Bet the ranch

Risk everything on something you think will succeed.

Bet your bottom dollar

be absolutely sure.

Better be the head of a dog than the tail of a lion

it is better to be the head or at the top of something that isn't very important or prestigious than a small or unimportant member of something big.

Better half

One's husband or wife.

Better late than never

Doing something late is better than not doing it at all.

Better safe than sorry

To be being cautious rather than taking a risk.

Better than a kick in the teeth

Better than nothing.

Better than a stick in the eye

Isn't very good, but it is better than nothing.

Better the devil you know

It is often better to deal with someone or something you are familiar with and know, even if they are not ideal, than take a risk with an unknown person or thing.

Between a rock and a hard place

In a position where you have to choose between unpleasant alternatives, and your choice might cause you problems; you will not be able to satisfy everyone.

Between the devil and the deep blue sea

In a dilemma; a difficult choice.

Between you and me and the cat's whiskers

Telling someone something that you want them to keep secret.

Beyond a shadow of a doubt

Absolutely no doubts remain.

Beyond belief

When people behave in such a way that you find it almost impossible to accept that they actually did it.

Beyond our ken

Beyond your understanding.

Beyond the black stump

Even if you go as far as you can, the black stump is still a little further.

Beyond the pale

Too extreme to be acceptable morally or socially.

Big Apple

New York.

Big bucks

Lot of money.

Big cheese

The boss.

Big Easy

New Orleans, Louisiana

Big fish

An important person in a company or an organisation.

Big fish in a small pond

An important person in a small place or organisation.

Big girl's blouse

A person who is very weak or fussy.

Big hitter

Someone who commands a lot of respect and is very important in their field.

Big nose

Excessively interested in everyone else's business.

Big picture

The overall perspective or objective.

Big time

Very much.

Bigger fish to fry

When you aren't interested in something because it isn't important to you and there are more important things for you to do.

Billy Wind

If the wind is so strong it is howling, one might say, "Wow- can you hear Billy Wind out there?"

Bird-brain

Someone who is stupid.

Birds and the bees

Refers to courtship and sexual intercourses.

Birds of a feather flock together

People with similar interests will stick together.

Birthday suit

Naked.

Bit between your teeth

Take or have control of a situation.

Bit part

When someone has a small or unimportant role in something.

Bit player

A small or unimportant role in something.

Bite off more than you can chew

Take on more responsibilities than you can manage.

Bite someone's head off

Criticise someone angrily.

Bite the bullet

Accept or face something unpleasant because it cannot be avoided.

Bite the dust

A way of saying that somebody has died, especially if they are killed violently.

Bite your lip

Make a conscious effort not to react or to keep quiet about something that displeases you.

Bite your tongue

Refrain from speaking because it is socially or otherwise better not to.

Bits and bobs

Small, remnant articles and things.

Bitter end

Do something to the very end, no matter how unsuccessful you are.

Bitter pill to swallow

Something that is hard to accept.

Black and blue

Bruised, either physically or metaphorically.

Black and white

When it is very clear who or what is right and wrong.

Black as Newgate's knocker

If things are as black as Newgate's knocker, they are very bad. Newgate was an infamous prison in England, so its door knocker meant trouble.

Black hole

Money has disappeared.

Black sheep

Someone who doesn't fit into a group or family because their behaviour or character is not good enough.

Black will take no other hue

Evil can take many forms but it is always black (evil).

Blackball

When you vote against allowing someone to be a member of an organisation or group.

Blank cheque

Allowed to use as much money as you need for a project.

Blank slate

Something that hasn't been developed or described in any detail.

Bleeding edge

A technology or process that is at the forefront or beyond current practices.

Bleeding heart

A person who is excessively sympathetic towards other people.

Bless your pointy little head

To patronise someone, especially when they don't realise that they're not very clever.

Blessing in disguise

When some bad luck or misfortune ultimately results in something positive.

Blind acceptance

Accept things without questioning them at all.

Blind as a bat

When you are in total darkness and can't see anything at all.

Blind leading the blind

When the people in charge of something don't know anything more than the people they are in charge of, when they should have greater knowledge.

Blind-sided

An event with a negative impact takes you completely by surprise.

Blink of an eye

Happens so fast it is almost impossible to notice it.

Blood and thunder

An emotional speech or performance.

Blood from a turnip

It is impossible to get something from someone if they don't have it.

Blood is thicker than water

Family relationships are stronger than others.

Blood is worth bottling

Complimenting or praising you for doing something or being someone very special.

Blood out of a stone

Very difficult.

Blood, sweat and tears

Very difficult and will require a lot of effort and sacrifice.

Blot your copybook

Make a mistake or do something wrong that will negatively affect someone's opinion of you.

Blow a fuse

Become uncontrollably angry.

Blow a gasket

Get very angry.

Blow by blow

Detail in sequence.

Blow hot and cold

When your attitude and opinion keeps changing; one minute you are for it, the next you are against.

Blow me down

Said when something surprising, shocking or unexpected is told.

Blow off steam

Express your anger or frustration.

Blow out of the water

Destroyed or defeated comprehensively.

Blow smoke

Exaggerate or say things that are not true, usually to make themselves look better.

Blow the cobwebs away

Make sweeping changes to something to bring fresh views and ideas in.

Blow the whistle

Report something to the authorities.

Blow your mind

Something extraordinary that amazes you beyond explanation.

Blow your own horn

Boast about your achievements and abilities.

Blow your own trumpet

Boast about one's own talents and achievements.

Blow your stack

Lose temper.

Blow your top

Lose one's temper.

Blue blood

Royalty.

Bluestocking

An intellectual woman

Boardinghouse reach

The ability to reach a long distance across a table to get food.

Bob's your uncle *Something will be successful.*

Body politic

A group of people organised under a single government or authority

Boil to the surface

A problem emerges at a particular time and needs to be discussed or resolved.

Bold as brass

Someone who is very confident and not worried about how other people will respond or about being caught.

Bolt from the blue

When something happens unexpectedly and suddenly.

Bone of contention

If there is an issue that always causes tension and arguments.

Bone to pick

Annoyed about something they have done and want to tell them how you feel.

Boot is on the other foot

A person who was in a position of weakness is now in a position of strength.

Born on the wrong side of the blanket
Illegitimate.

Born to the purple

Born in a royal or aristocratic family.

Born with a silver spoon in your mouth

Born into a rich family.

Both ends meet

Live off the money you earn and don't go into debt.

Bottom line

The conclusion.

Bottoms-up

Equivalent to 'Cheers' when drinking with someone.

Bounce ideas

Share your ideas with them to know whether they think they would work.

Bounce off the walls

Very excited about something.

Bouquet of orchids

Done something worthy of praise.

Box and dice

Everything.

Box clever

Use your intelligence to get what you want, even if you have to cheat a bit.

Box of fluffy ducks

When something is working well or going your way.

Boxing and coxing

Sharing responsibilities so that one of them is working while the other isn't.

Boys in blue

The police.

Boys will be boys

Men, will behave in certain ways, often noisily or irresponsibly.

Brain drain

Used when organisations or countries pay higher salaries to attract talented people from poorer countries.

Brain surgery/Rocket science

Something very complicated or difficult to understand or master.

Brass monkey

Extremely cold.

Brass neck

No sense of shame about what they do.

Brass tacks

Get down to the real business.

Bread and butter

Issues that affect people directly and in a very important way.

Bread and circuses

Activities that entertain people and distract them from problems to keep them from complaining or protesting

Breadwinner

Used to describe the person that earns the most money.

Break a leg

Wishing someone good luck.

Break even

You don't make any money, but you don't lose any either.

Break ground

Make progress, taking things into a new area or going further than anyone has gone before.

Break the back of the beast

Accomplish a challenge.

Break the ice

Get over any initial embarrassment or shyness when you meet someone for the first time and start conversing.

Break your duck

Do something for the first time.

Breathe down your neck

If someone follows you or examines what you're doing very closely.

C

Cake's not worth the candle

The result will not be worth the effort put in to achieve it.

Calf lick

The weird parting in your fringe where your hair grows in a different direction, usually to one side.

Call a spade a spade

One who speaks frankly and makes little or no attempt to conceal their opinions or to spare the feelings of their audience.

Call it a day

Stop doing something for a while, normally at least until the following day.

Call on the carpet

Summoned for a reprimand by superiors or others in power.

Call the dogs off

Stop attacking or criticising someone.

Call the shots

In charge and tell people what to do.

Call the tune

Making the important decisions about something.

Call time

Decide it is time to end something.

Calm before the storm

A calm time immediately before period of violent activity or argument

Can of worms

An action that can create serious problems.

Can't dance and it's too wet to plow

May as well do something because you can't or don't have the opportunity to do anything else.

Can't do it for toffee

Incapable of doing something properly or to any sort of standard.

Can't get a word in edgeways

Don't have the chance to say anything because the person you are with is talking all the time.

Can't get to 1st base

Having difficulties starting something.

Can't hack it

Unable to perform an act, duty, job etc.

Can't hold a candle?

Much worse.

Can't see the forest for its trees

Too focused on specific details to see the picture as a whole.

Canary in a coal mine

An early warning of danger.

Card up your sleeve

Have a surprise plan or idea that you are keeping back until the time is right.

Carpet bagger

An opportunist without any scruples or ethics, or a politician who wants to represent a place they have no connection with.

Carrot and stick

Offer an incentive to do something combined with the threat of punishment.

Carry the can

Take the blame for something, even though you didn't do it or are only partly at fault.

Carry the day

Winning a battle or competition for supremacy.

Case by case

Each situation or issue is handled separately on its own merits and demerits.

Case in point

Meaning an instance of something has just occurred that was previously discussed.

Cash cow

A product, business, etc, that generates a continuous flow of money or a high proportion of overall profits is a cash cow.

Cash in your chips

If you cash in your chips, you sell something to get what profit you can because you think its value is going to fall. It can also mean 'to die'.

Cast a long shadow

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

Cast aspersions

If you cast aspersions, you try to blacken someone's name and make people think badly of them.

Cast doubt on

If you make other people unsure about a matter, then you have cast doubt on it.

Cast iron stomach

A person with a cast iron stomach can eat or drink anything without any ill effects.

Cast pearls before swine

If you cast pearls before swine, you offer something of value to someone who doesn't appreciate it.

Cast sheep's eyes at

If you cast sheep's eyes at someone, you look lovingly or with longing at them.

Cast your mind back

If somebody tells you to cast your mind back on something, they want you to think about something that happened in the past, but which you might not remember very well, and to try to remember as much as possible.

Cast your net widely

If you cast your net widely, you use a wide range of sources when trying to find something.

Casting vote

The casting vote is a vote given to a chairman or president that is used when there is a deadlock.

Castles in the air

Plans that are impractical and will never work out are castles in the air.

Cat among the pigeons

If something or someone puts, or sets or lets, the cat among the pigeons, they create a disturbance and cause trouble.

Cat and dog life

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

Cat burglar

A cat burglar is a skilful thief who breaks into places without disturbing people or setting off alarms.

Cat got your tongue?

If someone asks if the cat has got your tongue, they want to know why you are not speaking when they think you should.

Cat nap

If you have a short sleep during the day, you are cat napping.

Cat's lick

A cat's lick is a very quick wash.

Cat's pajamas

Something that is the cat's pajamas is excellent.

Cat's whiskers

Something excellent is the cat's whiskers.

Catch as catch can

This means that people should try to get something any way they can.

Catch hell

If you catch hell, you get into trouble or get scolded.

Catch some z's

If you catch some z's, you get some sleep.

Catch someone red-handed

If someone is caught red-handed, they are found doing something wrong or illegal.

Catch-22

Catch-22 is a situation where conflicting rules make the desired outcome impossible.

Caught with your hand in the cookie jar

If someone is caught with his or her hand in the cookie jar, he or she is caught doing something wrong.

Caught with your pants down

If you are caught with your pants down, you are exposed in an embarrassing situation. It can also mean that you were caught unprepared for a situation or an event.

Chalk and cheese

Things, or people, that are like chalk and cheese are very different and have nothing in common.

Champ at the bit

If someone is champing at the bit, they are very eager to accomplish something.

Champagne taste on a beer budget

Someone who lives above their means and likes things they cannot afford has champagne taste on a beer budget.

Champagne tastes, beer wages

A person who likes expensive things but has a low income has champagne taste and beer wages.

Champing at the bit

To betray impatience, as to begin some action.

Change horses in midstream

If people change horses in

midstream, they change plans or leaders when they are in the middle of something, even though it may be very risky to do so.

Change of heart

If you change the way you think or feel about something, you have a change of heart.

Change tack

If you change tack, you use a different method for dealing with something.

Change your tune

If someone changes their ideas or the way they talk about them, they change their tune.

Chaps my ass

When something/someone really annoys you, it chaps your ass.

Chapter and verse

When you know something very well, and can quote it, you know it chapter and verse.

Charity begins at home

That family members are more important than anyone else, and should be the focus of a person's efforts.

Chase rainbows

If someone chases rainbows, they try to do something that they will never achieve.

Chase your tail

If you are chasing your tail, you are very busy but not being very productive.

Cheap as chips

If something is very inexpensive, it is as cheap as chips.

Cheap at half the price

If something's cheap at half the price, it's very cheap indeed.

Cheap shot

A cheap shot is an unprincipled criticism.

Cheat death

If someone cheats death, they narrowly avoid a major problem or accident.

Cheek by jowl

If things or people are cheek by jowl, they are very close together.

Cherry pick

If people cherry pick, they choose things that support their position, while ignoring things that contradict it.

Chew on a bone

If someone is chewing on a bone, he or she is thinking about something intently.

Chew the cud

If you chew the cud, you think carefully about something.

Chew the fat

If you chew the fat with someone, you talk at leisure with them.

Chickenfeed

If something is small or unimportant, especially money, it is chickenfeed.

Child's play

If something is child's play, it is very easy and simple.

Chinese walls

Chinese walls are regulatory information barriers that aim to stop the flow of information that could be misused, especially in financial corporations.

Chinese whispers

When a story is told from person to person, especially if it is gossip or scandal, it inevitably gets distorted

and exaggerated. This process is called Chinese whispers.

Chip off the old block

If someone is a chip off the old block, they closely resemble one or both of the parents in character.

Chip on your shoulder

If someone has a chip on their shoulder, they are resentful about something and feel that they have been treated badly.

Chomping at the bit

If you are chomping at the bit, you are eager to start on a task immediately.

Chop and change

If things chop and change, they keep changing, often unexpectedly.

Cigarette paper

If you cannot get or put a cigarette paper between people, they are so closely bonded that nothing will separate them or their positions on issues.

Circle the drain

If someone is circling the drain, they are spiralling downward to a usually inevitable death.

Circle the wagons

If you circle the wagons, you stop communicating with people who don't think the same way as you to avoid their ideas. It can also mean to bring everyone together to defend a group against an attack.

Circling the drain

If someone is circling the drain, they are very near to death and have little time to live. It also describe a project or plan or campaign that is on the brink of failure.

Class act

Someone who's a class act is exceptional in what they do.

Clean bill of health

If something or someone has a clean bill of health, then there's nothing wrong; everything's fine.

Clean break

If you make a clean break, you break away completely from something.

Clean hands

Someone with clean hands, or who keeps their hands clean, is not involved in illegal or immoral activities.

Clean sheet

When someone has a clean sheet, they have got no criminal record or problems affecting their reputation.

Clean slate

If you start something with a clean slate, then nothing bad from your past is taken into account.

Clean sweep

If someone makes a clean sweep, they win absolutely everything in a competition or contest.

Clean your clock

If you clean your clock, you beat someone decisively in a contest or fight.

Clear as a bell

If something is as clear as a bell, it is very clear or easy to understand.

Clear as mud

If something is as clear as mud, then it is very confusing and unclear.

Clear the decks

When you clear the decks, you get ready for an important action and put away items that might get in your way.

Cliff-hanger

If something is a cliff-hanger, then the result is so close that it cannot be predicted and will only be known at the very end.

Climb on the bandwagon

When people climb on the bandwagon they do something because it is popular and everyone else is doing it.

Climb the greasy pole

Advance within an organisation .

Cling to hope

If people cling to hope, they continue to hope though the chances of success are very small.

Close at hand

If something is close at hand, it is nearby or conveniently located.

Close but no cigar

If you are close but no cigar, you are close to success or the truth, but have not got there.

Close call

If the result of something is a close call, it is almost impossible to distinguish between the parties involved and to say who has won or whatever. It can also mean that you very nearly have a serious accident or get into trouble.

Close lipped

A person who is reluctant to talk about a specific subject is close lipped.

Close only counts in horseshoes and hand grenades

This phrase is used to say that if you come close to success without succeeding, it is not good enough

Close ranks

If members of an organisation close ranks, they show support for each other publicly, especially when being criticised.

Close shave

If you have a close shave, you very nearly have a serious accident or get into trouble.

Close the book

If you close the book on something, you end it completely.

Close the stable door after the horse has bolted

If people try to fix something after the problem has occurred, they are trying to close the stable door after the horse has bolted.

Close to your heart

If something is close to your heart, you care a lot about it.

Closed book to me

If a subject is a closed book to you, it is something that you don't understand or know anything about.

Cloth ears

If you don't listen to people, they may suggest you have cloth ears.

Cloud cuckoo land

If someone has ideas or plans that are completely unrealistic, they are living on cloud cuckoo land.

Cloud nine

If you are on cloud nine, you are extremely happy.

Cloud of suspicion

If a cloud of suspicion hangs over an individual, it means that they are not believed or are distrusted.

Cloud on the horizon

If you can see a problem ahead, you can call it a cloud on the horizon.

Clutch at straws

If someone is in serious trouble and tries anything to help them, even though their chances of success are probably nil, they are clutching at straws.

Clutch play

If an activity is referred to as a clutch play, it means that the activity was the key to the success or failure of the venture.

Coals to Newcastle

Taking, bringing, or carrying coals to Newcastle is doing something that is completely unnecessary.

Coast is clear

When the coast is clear, the people supposed to be watching you are not there and you are able to move or leave.

Cock a snook

To make a rude gesture by putting one thumb to the nose with the fingers outstretched.

Cock and bull story

A cock and bull story is a lie someone tells that is completely unbelievable.

Cock in the henhouse

This is used to describe a male in an all-female environment.

Cock of the walk

A man who is excessively confident

and thinks he's better than other people is the cock of the walk.

Cog in the machine

A person who does an unimportant job in a large company or organisation is a cog in the machine.

Cold day in hell

This is used as a prediction there is no chance some event or condition will ever happen.

Cold feet

If you get cold feet about something, you lose the courage to do it.

Cold fish

A cold fish is a person who doesn't show how they feel.

Cold light of day

If you see things in the cold light of day, you see them as they really are, not as you might want them to be.

Cold shoulder

If you give or show someone the cold shoulder, you are deliberately unfriendly and uncooperative towards them.

Cold sweat

If something brings you out in a cold sweat, it frightens you a lot.

Cold turkey

If someone suddenly stops taking drugs, instead of slowly cutting down, they do cold turkey.

Colder than a witch's tit

If it is colder than a witch's tit, it is extremely cold outside.

Collateral damage

Accidental or unintended damage or casualties are collateral damage.

Collect dust

If something is collecting dust, it isn't being used any more.

Color bar

Rules that restrict access on the basis of race or ethnicity are a color bar.

Come a cropper

Someone whose actions or lifestyle will inevitably result in trouble is going to come a cropper.

Come clean

If someone comes clean about something, they admit to deceit or wrongdoing.

Come hell or high water

If someone says they'll do something come hell or high water, they mean that nothing will stop them, no matter what happens.

Come of age

When something comes of age it develops completely and reaches maturity.

Come on hard

If you come on hard, you are aggressive in your dealing with someone.

Come on the heels of

If something comes on the heels of something, it follows very soon after it.

Come out in the wash

If something will come out in the wash, it won't have any permanent negative effect.

Come out of the woodwork

When things come out of the woodwork, they appear unexpectedly.

D

Daft as a brush

Someone who is daft as a brush is rather stupid.

Damp squib

If something is expected to have a great effect or impact but doesn't, it is a damp squib.

Dancing on someone's grave

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

Dark horse

If someone is a dark horse, they are a bit of a mystery and we don't know how they will react or perform.

Davey Jones' locker

Davey Jones' locker is the bottom of the sea or resting place of drowned sailors.

Day in the sun

If you have your day in the sun, you get attention and are appreciated.

Daylight robbery

If you are overcharged or underpaid, it is a daylight robbery; open, unfair and hard to prevent.

Days are numbered

When someone's days are numbered, they are expected to die soon.

Dead air

When there is a period of total silence, there is dead air.

Dead and buried

If something is dead and buried, it has all long been settled and is not going to be reconsidered.

Dead duck

Someone or something is bound to fail or die is a dead duck.

Dead even

If people competing are dead even, they are at exactly the same stage or moving at exactly the same speed.

Dead from the neck up

Someone who's dead from the neck up is very stupid indeed.

Dead heat

If a race ends in a dead heat, two or more finish with exactly the same result.

Dead in the water

If something is dead in the water, it isn't going anywhere or making any progress.

Dead level best

If you try your dead level best, you try as hard as you possibly could to do something.

Dead man walking

A dead man walking is someone who is in great trouble and will certainly get punished; lose their job or position, etc, soon.

Dead meat

This is used as a way of threatening someone: You'll be dead meat if you don't go along.

Dead men's shoes

If promotion or success requires replacing somebody, then it can only be reached by dead men's shoes' by getting rid of them.

Dead right

This means that something or someone is absolutely correct, without doubt.

Dead to the world

If somebody's fast asleep and completely unaware of what is happening around them, he or she's dead to the world.

Dead wrong

If someone is dead wrong, they are absolutely in error, absolutely incorrect or of incorrect opinion.

Deaf as a post

Someone who is as deaf as a post is unable to hear at all.

Dear John letter

A letter written by a partner explaining why they are ending the relationship is a Dear John letter.

Death of a thousand cuts

If someone is suffering the death of a thousand cuts, or death by a thousand cuts, lots of small bad things are happening, none of which are fatal in themselves, but which add up to a slow and painful demise.

Death warmed up

If someone looks like death warmed up, it means that they look very ill.

Decorate the mahogany

When someone buys a round a pub or bar, they decorate the mahogany; putting cash on the bar.

Deep pockets

If someone has deep pockets, they are wealthy.

Deep pockets but short arms

Someone who has money but never puts his hand in his pocket to pay for anything has deep pockets but short arms.

Deer in the headlights

When one is caught off-guard and needs to make a decision, but cannot react quickly.

Deliver the goods

Do what is required, come up to expectations.

Derring-do

If a person shows derring-do, they show great courage.

Devil finds work for idle hands

When people say that the devil finds work for idle hands, they mean that if people don't have anything to do with their time, they are more likely to get involved in trouble and criminality.

Devil is in the detail

When people say that the devil is in the detail, they mean that small things in plans and schemes that are often overlooked can cause serious problems later on.

Devil may care

If you live a devil-may-care life it means you are willing to take more risks than most people.

Devil's advocate

If someone plays Devil's advocate in an argument, they adopt a position they don't believe in just for the sake of the argument

Diamond in the rough

A diamond in the rough is someone or something that has great potential, but isn't not refined and polished.

Dice with death

If you do something that is very dangerous, you are dicing with death.

Die is cast

If the die is cast, a decision has been made that cannot be altered and fate will decide the consequences.

Different kettle of fish

If something is a different kettle of fish, it is very different from the other things referenced.

Different ropes for different folks

Different people do things in different ways that suit them.

Different strokes for different folks

Different people do things in different ways that suit them.

Dig way down deep

When someone digs way down deep, they look into their inner feelings to see how they feel about it.

Dig your heels in

If you dig your heels in, you start to resist something.

Dime a dozen

If something is a dime a dozen, it is extremely common, possibly too common.

Dine on ashes

If someone is dining on ashes

he or she is excessively focusing attention on failures or regrets for past actions.

Dinosaur

A dinosaur is a person who is thought to be too old for their position.

Dip your toes in the water

If you dip your toes in the water, you try something tentatively because you are not sure whether it will work or not.

Dirty dog

A dirty dog is an untrustworthy person.

Discerning eye

If a person has a discerning eye, they are particularly good at judging the quality of something.

Discretion is the better part of valour

It is often better to think carefully and not act than to do something that may cause problems.

Dish the dirt

If you dish the dirt on something or someone, you make unpleasant or shocking information public.

Do a Devon Loch

If someone does a Devon Loch, they fail when they were very close to winning.

Do a Lord Lucan

If someone disappears without a trace or runs off, they do a Lord Lucan.

Do a runner

If people leave a restaurant without paying, they do a runner.

Do as you would be done by

Treat and respect others as you would hope to be respected and treated by them.

Do the needful

If you do the needful, you do what is necessary.

Do the running

The person who has to do the running has to make sure that things get done.

Do the trick

If something does the trick, it is needed or has the necessary effect.

Do their dirty work

Someone who does someone's dirty work carries out the unpleasant jobs that the first person doesn't want to do.

Do time

When someone is doing time, they are in prison.

Do's and don'ts

The do's and don'ts are what is acceptable or allowed or not within an area or issue, etc.

Dodge the bullet

If someone has dodged a bullet, they have successfully avoided a very serious problem.

Does a one-legged duck swim in circles?

This is a response given to an unnecessary question for which the obvious answer is yes.

Dog and pony show

A dog and pony show is a presentation or some marketing that has lots of style, but no real content.

Dog days

Dog days are very hot summer days.

Dog eat dog

In a dog eat dog world, there is intense competition and rivalry, where everybody thinks only of himself or herself.

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.

Dog tired

If you are dog tired, you are exhausted.

Dog's dinner

Something that is a dog's dinner is a real mess.

Dog's life

If some has a dog's life, they have a very unfortunate and wretched life.

Dog-eared

If a book is dog-eared, it is in bad condition, with torn pages, etc.

Dog-whistle politics

When political parties have policies that will appeal to racists while not being overtly racist, they are indulging in dog-whistle politics.

Doggy bag

If you ask for a doggy bag in a restaurant, they will pack the food you haven't eaten for you to take home.

Doldrums

If a person is in the doldrums, they are depressed. If a project or something similar is in the doldrums, it isn't making any progress.

Dollars for doughnuts

If something is dollars for doughnuts, it is a sure bet or certainty.

Don't give up the day job

a way of telling something that they do something badly.

Don't hold your breath

If you are told not to hold your breath, it means that you shouldn't have high expectations about something.

Don't know whether to wind a watch or bark at the moon

If you don't know what to do, you don't know whether to wind a watch or bark at the moon.

Don't look a gift horse in the mouth

if you are given something, a present or a chance, you should not waste it by being too critical or examining it too closely.

Don't mention it

This is used as a response to being thanked, suggesting that the help given was no trouble.

Don't mention the war

you shouldn't speak about things that could cause an argument or tension.

Don't push my buttons!

This can be said to someone who is starting to annoy you.

Don't shoot the messenger

This phrase can be used when breaking some bad news to someone and you don't want to be blamed for the news.

Don't stand there with curlers in your hair

This means 'don't keep me waiting'. It's said to someone who is taking too long to get moving.

Don't stop and kick at every dog that barks at you

If we stop to kick at every dog that barks at us we will never arrive at our destination in life, because

we are obsessed with righting insignificant wrongs that should have no more effect on us than a dog that barks as we walk by.

Don't sweat the small stuff

This is used to tell people not to worry about trivial or unimportant issues.

Don't take any wooden nickels

This idiom is used to advise people not to be cheated or ripped off.

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.

Don't trouble trouble until trouble troubles you

Don't go looking for trouble or problems- let them come to you.

Don't upset the applecart

If you are advised not to upset the applecart, you are being told not to disturb the way things are done because it might ruin things.

Don't wash your dirty laundry in public

Making things public that are best left private.

Done to death

If a joke or story has been done to death, it has been told so often that it has stopped being funny.

Donkey work

Donkey work is any hard, boring work or task.

Donkey's years

This idiom means 'a very long time'.

Doormat

A person who doesn't stand up for themselves and gets treated badly is a doormat.

Dot all the i's and cross all the it's

If you dot all the i's and cross all the t's, you do something very carefully and thoroughly.

Double Dutch

If something is double Dutch, it is completely incomprehensible.

Double take

If someone does a double take, they react very slowly to something to show how shocked or surprised they are.

Double whammy

A double whammy is when something causes two problems at the same time, or when two setbacks occur at the same time.

Double-edged sword

If someone uses an argument that could both help them and harm them, then they are using a double-edged sword; it cuts both ways.

Doubting Thomas

A Doubting Thomas is someone who only believes what they see themselves, not what they are told.

Down and dirty

Down and dirty means unscrupulous and very competitive.

Down and out

If someone is down and out, they are desperately poor and need help.

Down at heel

Someone who is down at heel is short of money.

Down for the count

If someone is down for the count, they have lost a struggle, like a boxer who has been knocked out.

Down in the doldrums

If somebody's down in the doldrums, they are depressed and lacking energy.

Down in the dumps

If someone's down in the dumps, they are depressed.

Down in the mouth

If someone is down in the mouth, they look unhappy or depressed.

Down the drain

If something goes down the drain, especially money or work, it is wasted or produces no results.

Down the hatch

This idiom can be said before drinking alcohol in company.

Down the pan

If something has gone down the pan, it has failed or been ruined.

Down the pike

Something that is down the pike it is in the future.

Down the Swanee

If a plan or scheme, etc, goes down the Swanee, it goes wrong or fails.

Down the tubes

If something has gone down the tubes, it has failed or been ruined.

Down to the wire

If something goes down to the wire, like a competition, then it goes to the very last moment before it is clear who has won.

Down-to-earth

Someone who's down-to-earth is practical and realistic. It can also be used for things like ideas.

Drag your feet

If someone is dragging their feet, they are taking too long to do or finish something, usually because they don't want to do it.

Drag your heels

If you drag your heels, you either delay doing something or do it as slowly as possible because you don't want to do it.

Draw a bead on

To draw a bead on is to aim a gun at something and can be used to mean to focus on or aim at something as a goal.

Draw a blank

If you try to find something out and draw a blank, you don't get any useful information.

Draw a line in the sand

If you draw a line in the sand, you establish a limit beyond which things will be unacceptable.

Draw a long bow

If someone draws a long bow, they lie or exaggerate.

Draw the line

When you draw the line, you set out limits of what you find acceptable, beyond which you will not go.

Draw the shortest straw

If someone draws the shortest straw, they lose or are chosen to do something unpleasant.

Drawing card

A famous person who attracts people to attend an event is a drawing card.

Dress someone down

If you dress someone down, you scold them.

Dress to kill

When someone is dressed to kill, they are dressed very smartly.

Dressed to the nines

If you are in your very best clothes, you're dressed to the nines.

Drink like a fish

If someone drinks like a fish, they drink far too much alcohol.

Drive a wedge

If you drive a wedge between people, you exploit an issue so that people start to disagree.

Drive home

The idiomatic expression 'drive home' means 'reinforce'

Drive someone up the wall

If something or someone drives you up the wall, they do something that irritates you greatly.

Drive you spare

If someone or something drives you spare, it is extremely annoying.

Driven by a motor

This is used to describe people with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder when they talk excessively.

Drop a bombshell

If someone drops a bombshell, they announce something that changes a situation drastically and unexpectedly.

Drop a dime

If you drop a dime, you inform the police about someone's illegal activities.

Drop in the bucket

A drop in the bucket is something so small that it won't make any noticeable difference.

Drop in the ocean

A drop in the ocean implies that something will have little effect because it is small and mostly insignificant.

Drop into your lap

If something drops into your lap, you receive it suddenly, without any warning.

Drop like flies

This means that something is disappearing very quickly.

Drop someone a line

If you drop someone a line, you send a letter to them.

Drop the ball

If someone drops the ball, they are not doing their job or taking their responsibilities seriously enough and let something go wrong.

Dropped like a hot cake

If something is dropped like a hot cake, it is rejected or disposed of very quickly.

Drown your sorrows

If someone gets drunk or drinks a lot to try to stop feeling unhappy, they drown their sorrows.

Drunk as a lord

Someone who is very drunk is as drunk as a lord.

Drunker than a peach orchard boar

Very drunk, as when a boar would eat fermented peaches that have fallen from the tree.

Dry as a bone

If your lawn is as dry as a bone, the soil is completely dry.

Dry as a wooden god

Very dry area or very thirsty.

Dry as dust

Very dry.

Dry as snuff

If something is as dry as snuff, it is very dry indeed.

Dry run

A dry run is a full rehearsal or trial exercise of something to see how it will work before it is launched.

Dry spell

If something or someone is having a dry spell, they aren't being as successful as they normally are.

Duck soup

If something is duck soup, it is very easy.

Duck to water

If you take to something like a duck to water, you find when you start that you have a natural affinity for it.

Ducks in a row

If you have your ducks in a row, you are well-organized.

Dull as ditchwater

If something is as dull as ditchwater, it is incredibly boring.

Dumb as a post

Someone's who's as dumb as a post is very stupid, like a fencepost.

Dumb as a rock

If you are dumb as a rock, you have no common sense and are stupid.

Dunkirk spirit

Dunkirk spirit is when people pull together to get through a very difficult time.

Dutch auction

Something is changed until it is accepted by everyone.

Dutch courage

Dutch courage is the reckless bravery caused by drinking too much.

Dutch treat

If something like a meal is a Dutch treat, then each person pays their own share of the bill.

Dutch uncle

A Dutch uncle is a person who gives unwelcome advice.

Dutch wife

A Dutch wife is a long pillow or a hot water bottle.

Dwell on the past

Thinking too much about the past, so that it becomes a problem is to dwell on the past.

Dyed-in-the-wool

If someone is a dyed-in-the-wool supporter of a political party, etc, they support them totally, without any questions.

E

Each to their own

Different people have different preferences.

Eager beaver

A person who is extremely keen is an eager beaver.

Eagle eyes

Someone who has eagle eyes sees everything; no detail is too small.

Early bath

If someone has or goes for an early bath, they quit or lose their job or position earlier than expected because things have gone wrong.

Early bird catches the worm

The early bird catches the worm means that if you start something early, you stand a better chance of success.

Earn a living

To make money

Ears are burning

If your ears are burning, you sense or know that people somewhere else are talking about you in an unpleasant way.

Easier said than done

If something is easier said than done, it is much more difficult than it sounds.

Easy as ABC

Something that is as easy as ABC is very easy or simple.

Easy as pie

If something is easy as pie, it is very easy indeed.

Easy come, easy go

This idiom means that money or other material gains that come without much effort tend to get spent or consumed as easily.

Easy does it

Easy does it' is used to advise someone to approach a task carefully and slowly.

Easy on the eyes

Someone who's easy on the eyes is pleasing to look at, an attractive person.

Easy peasy

If something is easy peasy, it is very easy indeed.

Eat crow

If you eat crow, you have to admit that you were wrong about something.

Eat humble pie

If someone apologises and shows a lot of contrition for something they have done, they eat humble pie.