

Idiom	Meaning	Use in sentence
A snowball effect	The aspect of momentum in every event and how they build upon each other	The rumors spread with a snowball effect, getting worse each day.
Acid test	Proves the effectiveness of something.	The prototype's first use will be the acid test for the new tech.
Actions speak louder than words	People's intentions can be judged better by what they do than what they say.	He promised change, but actions speak louder than words.
Add insult to injury	To further a loss with mockery or indignity; to worsen an unfavourable situation.	He crashed her car and then mocked her—adding insult to injury.
After the watershed	A time when after which programmes for older audiences may be aired on TV.	The movie aired after the watershed due to adult content.
Against the clock	Being rushed and having little time to complete something.	We were racing against the clock to finish the project.
Ahead of time	Something that happens early or before it is supposed to.	She arrived ahead of time for her appointment.
All ears	Awaiting an explanation.	I'm all ears—tell me what happened.
An arm and a leg	Very expensive or costly. A large amount of money.	That designer bag costs an arm and a leg.
Apple of my eye	Someone or something that is cherished and loved above all else.	His daughter is the apple of his eye.
Around the clock	At any time of the day or night	The nurses worked around the clock during the emergency.
Around the corner	Will happen soon.	The deadline is just around the corner.
As time goes by	The passing of one moment to the next.	As time goes by, the memories fade.
At the drop of a hat	Without any hesitation; instantly.	She's ready to travel at the drop of a hat.
Back against the wall	Stuck in a difficult circumstance with no escape	With his back against the wall, he had to fight.
Back to basics	An approach that uses traditional ideas that have previously worked.	The teacher went back to basics to help the students understand.
Back to the drawing board	When an attempt fails and it's time to start all over.	The plan failed—back to the drawing board.
Bad apple	Troublemaker or undesirable person in a group.	One bad apple can spoil the whole group.
Ball is in your court	It is up to you to make the next decision or take the next step.	I've made my offer—the ball is in your court.
Barking up the wrong tree	Looking in the wrong place. Accusing the wrong person.	If you think I broke it, you're barking up the wrong tree.
Be glad to see the back of	Be happy when a person leaves.	I'll be glad to see the back of winter.

Beat around the bush	To avoid talking about what's important	Stop beating around the bush and tell me the truth.
Beat the clock	Do something quickly before it's too late.	We managed to beat the clock and finish early.
Bee in one's bonnet	Carrying an idea that's constantly in your thoughts.	He's got a bee in his bonnet about recycling.
Behind the times	Being old-fashioned.	His fashion sense is behind the times.
Bells and whistles	Lots of desirable features.	The new phone has all the bells and whistles.
Best of both worlds	Enjoying the advantage of two things simultaneously.	Working from home gives me the best of both worlds.
Best thing since sliced bread	A good invention or innovation. A good idea or plan.	This app is the best thing since sliced bread.
Better late than never	It is better to do something late than not at all.	He finally apologized—better late than never.
Bide one's time	Waiting for further developments before taking action or making decisions.	She's biding her time before making her move.
Big cheese	Influential person	He's the big cheese at the office.
Bird in the hand is worth two in the bush	Better to be satisfied with what you have than risk losing it by trying to get something better.	Don't risk it—a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.
Bite off more than you can chew	To take on a task that is way too big.	He bit off more than he could chew with the new project.
Black and blue	Badly bruised.	He came home black and blue from the fight.
Black and white	When there is no room for ambiguity or nuance.	The rules are clear—black and white.
Black as night	Very dark and hard to see.	The cave was black as night.
Black eye	Bruise around the eye.	He got a black eye in the game.
Black market	Where goods are illegally bought and sold for profit.	They bought the parts on the black market.
Black out	Darken by turning off or dimming the lights. Lose consciousness.	She blacked out from the heat.
Black sheep	Undesirable member of a group.	He's the black sheep of the family.
Blackball	Exclude or ostracise someone socially. Reject someone.	They tried to blackball him from the club.
Blacklist	Exclude someone.	The site was blacklisted for malware.
Blackmail	Extort or take money from someone by threatening to use their secrets against them.	He was arrested for blackmail.
Blessing in disguise	Something good that isn't recognised as such at first.	Losing that job was a blessing in disguise.
Blind date	Pre-arranged social interaction between people who have never met.	I met her on a blind date.
Blood red	Description of something with a deep red colour.	The sky turned blood red at sunset.

Blood, sweat & tears	Something that requires a lot of effort and hard work.	It took blood, sweat and tears to finish the project.
Blow a fuse	Suddenly get very angry, perhaps over something unexpected.	He blew a fuse when he saw the mess.
Blow hot and cold	Alternate inconsistently between moods and actions	She blows hot and cold about the idea.
Blow up in the face	A plan or project that suddenly fails.	The plan blew up in their face.
Blue blood	From noble, aristocratic or wealthy family.	He comes from a blue-blooded family.
Blue collar	Working in a manual labour job.	He has a blue-collar job.
Blue in the face	Try hard to win an agreement but usually unsuccessful.	You can argue until you're blue in the face.
Blue ribbon	Superior quality or distinction. The best of a group.	It's a blue-ribbon performance.
Boil the ocean	Taking up an almost impossible or overly ambitious project	Let's not try to boil the ocean—focus on the goal.
Bolt from the blue	Unexpected bad news.	The news came like a bolt from the blue.
Bookworm	Someone who reads a lot.	She's such a bookworm—always reading.
Born with a silver spoon in one's mouth	Born into a rich and affluent family.	He was born with a silver spoon in his mouth.
Bottom falls out	A plan or project that fails.	The bottom fell out of the market.
Brainstorm	Develop or think of new ideas.	Let's brainstorm ideas for the ad.
Bread-winner	Person that is the primary source of income for a family.	He's the main bread-winner of the family.
Break fresh/new ground	Doing something that has never been done before	The company is breaking new ground in AI.
Bring home the bacon	Earn a living.	She works hard to bring home the bacon.
Broken watch is right twice a day	When something is lucky or successful but undeserving.	Even a broken watch is right twice a day.
Buckle down	Working hard with determination and full attention.	It's time to buckle down and study.
Bun in the oven	Pregnant.	She's got a bun in the oven!
Burn the midnight oil	To work late into the night, alluding to the time before electric lighting.	I had to burn the midnight oil to finish the report.
Burn your boats/bridges	Doing something that makes it impossible to go back to the original state.	He burned his bridges when he quit abruptly.
Butter up	Flatter someone, usually because you want something from them.	She tried to butter up her boss.
By degrees	Something happens or develops gradually or little by little.	By degrees, they made progress.

By the skin of your teeth	Only just succeed.	I passed the test by the skin of my teeth.
Call it a day (or night)	Stop doing something for a while or until the next day (or night).	Let's call it a day and go home.
Calling time	Deciding to end something.	They're calling time on the event.
Carry the torch for	Having string feelings for someone who cannot be yours.	He's still carrying the torch for his ex.
Cash cow	Dependable source of income.	That product is their cash cow.
Cat burglar	Thief who climbs into buildings.	The cat burglar struck again.
Catch someone at a bad time	When it is inconvenient.	Sorry, did I catch you at a bad time?
Catch someone red-handed	Catch someone in the act of committing a crime or doing something they shouldn't.	They caught him red-handed stealing.
Chance one's arm	Deciding to do something even though the chances of success are slim or unknown.	He chanced his arm and asked for a raise.
Chase rainbows	Try to achieve something that is very difficult, impossible or very desirable.	He's always chasing rainbows.
Chase your tail	Spend a lot of time and energy but achieve nothing.	You're chasing your tail with all those tasks.
Cheesy	Tacky, silly, inauthentic or cheap.	That movie was so cheesy.
Clock-in/clock-out	Record the time of arrival and the time of departure.	I clocked in at 9 and out at 5.
Close to home	A comment that is true and makes you uncomfortable.	That comment hit close to home.
Cold Feet	Lose the courage to do something	He got cold feet before the wedding.
Cold shoulder	Pay no attention to.	She gave him the cold shoulder.
Coming of age	When something develops completely and reached maturity. When a child becomes an adult.	The story is a coming-of-age tale.
Cook someone's goose	Spoil the person's chance of success.	You really cooked your goose this time.
Copycat	Someone who copies the work of another.	He's just a copycat.
Costs an arm and a leg	When something is very expensive.	That dress costs an arm and a leg.
Couch potato	Lazy person who watches too much TV.	He's a total couch potato on weekends.
Cover a lot of ground	Complete a lot of work or a wide range of things.	We covered a lot of ground in that meeting.
Crack of dawn	Very early in the morning. The first moments of sunrise.	We left at the crack of dawn.
Cross that bridge when you come to it	Deal with a problem if and when it becomes necessary, not before.	Don't worry—we'll cross that bridge when we come to it.
Crunch time	When an important decision needs to be made by.	It's crunch time before the deadline.

Cry over spilt milk	Complain about a loss from the past.	Don't cry over spilt milk.
Curiosity killed the cat	Being Inquisitive can lead you into an unpleasant or dangerous situation.	Be careful—curiosity killed the cat.
Cut corners	Doing something in an easier and least expensive manner	They cut corners building the house.
Cut one's own throat	Doing something that will cause your own failure or downfall.	If he quits his job now, he'll be cutting his own throat financially.
Cut the mustard	To succeed; to come up to expectations; adequate enough to compete or participate.	She really cuts the mustard as a project manager—everyone is impressed.
Cut to the chase	Getting to the point.	Let's cut to the chase—what exactly are you trying to say?
Day to day	Part of a usual routine.	His day-to-day responsibilities include managing emails and scheduling meetings.
Days are numbered	Expected to be in a role or to die soon.	The mechanic said my car's days are numbered—it won't pass inspection again.
Dead duck	Plan or event that has failed or is certain to fail and therefore not worth discussing.	After the scandal, the politician became a dead duck in the election.
Dead in the water	Plan or project that has ceased to function and is not expected to re-activate.	Without funding, the project is dead in the water.
Dead wood	People or things that are no longer useful or necessary.	The manager decided to fire the dead wood and improve team efficiency.
Deep down	Describing what a person really feels deep inside them	Deep down, she knew she had made a mistake.
Deliver the goods	Do what is expected or required.	The new manager really delivered the goods and improved sales.
Devil's Advocate	To present a counter argument.	Let me play devil's advocate—what if the plan fails?
Do time (serve time)	Spend time in prison.	He did time for a crime he didn't commit.
Don't count your chickens before they've hatch	Don't make plans for something that might not happen.	Don't count your chickens before they've hatched—you haven't got the job yet.
Don't give up the day job	You are not very good at something. You could definitely not do it professionally.	You want to be a singer? Don't give up the day job just yet.
Don't put all your eggs in one basket	Don't make everything dependent on only one thing.	I always diversify my investments—never put all your eggs in one basket.
Donkey's years	A very long period of time.	I haven't seen her in donkey's years!

Double date	Social interaction that involves two couples.	We went on a double date with my sister and her boyfriend.
Drastic times call for drastic measures	When you are extremely desperate you need to take drastic actions.	Drastic times call for drastic measures—we had to fire half the staff.
Drawing a blank	Get no response from someone when you ask them a question or to have no answer yourself.	I tried to remember her name but kept drawing a blank.
Dropout	Stop attending school before it is time.	He dropped out of college to start his own business.
Dwell on the past	Thinking too much about something that happened in the past.	It's not healthy to dwell on the past—move forward.
Eager beaver	Enthusiastic and hard worker.	She's an eager beaver, always the first to volunteer.
Easy as ABC	Very simple or easy.	Don't worry, it's easy as ABC.
Eat like a horse	Eating too excessively	He eats like a horse and still stays skinny!
Eat, sleep & breathe something	Being so enthusiastic and passionate about something that you think about it all the time.	She eats, sleeps, and breathes dance—it's her life.
Egg head	Studious and academic person.	He's a real egghead—knows everything about quantum physics.
Elbow room	Enough space to move or work in.	This office is so cramped, there's no elbow room.
Eleventh hour	At the very last minute or just in time.	We got the contract at the eleventh hour.
Elvis has left the building	The show has come to an end. It's all over.	Okay, show's over—Elvis has left the building!
Every cloud has a silver lining	Be optimistic, even difficult times will lead to better days. Good can come from a bad situation.	Losing the job was tough, but every cloud has a silver lining.
Explore all avenues	Investigating or examining every option.	We explored all avenues before deciding to close the business.
Eye-catching	Tending to attract attention.	That red dress is really eye-catching.
Fallen in love	Start feeling love towards someone.	They've fallen in love and plan to move in together.
Far cry from	Very different from.	Living here is a far cry from the city life I'm used to.
Feeling blue	Feeling depressed or disconnected.	I've been feeling blue ever since she moved away.
Feeling under the weather	Feeling unwell.	I think I'm coming down with something—I feel under the weather.

Fever pitch	When a feeling is very intense and exciting.	Tensions reached fever pitch during the final moments of the game.
Fill in the blanks	Supply missing words or information.	You need to fill in the blanks on this form.
First in, best dressed	The opportunity is afforded to the first to arrive or present themselves.	Get there early—first in, best dressed.
First out of the gate	Being the first one to make a start at something	He was first out of the gate with a working prototype.
Fish out of water	Feeling uncomfortable in unfamiliar surroundings	Wearing a suit at the beach made me feel like a fish out of water.
Foot in the door	Small but good start with the possibility of a bright future.	The internship gave her a foot in the door at the company.
For the time being	An action or state will continue into the future but is temporary.	For the time being, we'll continue working remotely.
From now on	From this time forward.	From now on, I'm sticking to a strict budget.
From time to time	Occasionally or not very often.	From time to time, I check in with old colleagues.
Full of beans	Excited or very energetic and lively.	After his coffee, he was full of beans again.
Full of the joys of spring	Very happy and full of energy.	She's full of the joys of spring after the promotion.
Get your act together	Get organized and do things effectively	You need to get your act together before the meeting.
Getting sacked (or axed, or fired)	To lose your job.	He got sacked for consistently missing deadlines.
Getting the show on the road	Putting a plan or idea into action.	Alright, let's get the show on the road!
Give the benefit of the doubt	Believe someone's statement, without proof.	I didn't see the mistake, so I gave him the benefit of the doubt.
Give the green light	Provide permission to proceed.	The city gave the green light to the new development.
Go belly up	Fail completely.	The startup went belly up after just one year.
Going places	Demonstrating talent and ability that will lead to success.	She's really going places with her new business idea.
Golden boy	Young man idolised for a great skill, typically in sport.	Everyone expected the golden boy to succeed effortlessly.
Golden handshake	Large sum of money given to someone when they retire from a company.	He received a golden handshake when he retired early.

Golden opportunity	A very good opportunity that may never present itself again.	This internship is a golden opportunity—don't waste it.
Good things come to those who wait	To have patience	Be patient—good things come to those who wait.
Grass is always greener on the other side	The alternative solution may seem better even if that isn't always the case.	He always thinks the grass is greener on the other side.
Grease someone's palm	Give someone money in order to persuade them to do something dishonest.	The inspector was accused of greasing someone's palm.
Green thumb	Ability to make plants grow or be good at gardening.	She has a green thumb—everything she plants grows beautifully.
Green with envy	Extremely jealous or full of envy.	I was green with envy when I saw their vacation photos.
Grey area	Unclear or undefined.	The rules about remote work are still a grey area.
Hanging on by fingernails	Continuing to do something in a very difficult situation.	We're hanging on by our fingernails until payday.
Hard as nails	Without sentiment or sympathy for anyone.	She may look delicate, but she's hard as nails.
Hard time	Something that is difficult or to suffer hardship.	He did hard time for robbery.
Having one's heart set on something	Possessing a determination to achieve something.	She has her heart set on getting into that university.
Head in the clouds	Having unrealistic or impractical ideas.	He always has his head in the clouds—never pays attention.
Head over heels in love	Very much in love with someone.	They're head over heels in love.
Hear it on the grapevine	Hear something through informal or unofficial means, like gossip.	I heard on the grapevine that she's getting promoted.
Heart is in the right place	Having good intentions, even if the results may not be impressive.	He's clumsy but his heart is in the right place.
Here today, gone tomorrow	When desirable things, such as money or happiness, are temporary.	Tourists come and go—here today, gone tomorrow.
High time	When something should have been done already and is overdue.	It's high time you cleaned your room!
Hit the big time	To become successful.	She hit the big time after her song went viral.
Hit the books	Begin studying hard.	I need to hit the books before finals.
Hit the nail on the head	Do or say something exactly right.	You really hit the nail on the head with that idea.
Hit the panic button	Act quickly and without thinking in reaction to an unexpected event.	The manager hit the panic button when sales dropped.

Hit the road	Begin travelling or leave.	Let's hit the road—we have a long drive ahead.
Hit the sack	Go to sleep	I'm exhausted—I'm going to hit the sack.
Hold the fort	Have responsibility for something or care about someone while others are away or out.	Can you hold the fort while I grab lunch?
Honest as the day is long	Someone that is trustworthy and honest.	She's as honest as the day is long.
Hot potato	Speak of a current issue which many people are talking about and which is usually disputed.	That's a hot potato—I wouldn't touch that issue.
Hour of need	When someone really needs something – their last chance.	He helped me in my hour of need.
In due course	Everything will happen when it is supposed to or at the appropriate time.	We'll make a decision in due course.
In one's own time	Taking as long as you want to complete something or completing something at your own pace.	Finish it in your own time—no rush.
In someone's black book	Be in disgrace or disfavour with someone.	Ever since the argument, I think I'm in her black book.
In the bag	Something that is assured or a guaranteed success.	Don't worry—the job is in the bag.
In the black	In profit.	Our company is finally in the black after years of loss.
In the blink of an eye (or an instant)	Something that happens very quickly.	The car crash happened in the blink of an eye.
In the heat of the moment	Overwhelmed by what is happening in the moment.	I said something rude in the heat of the moment.
In the interim	Between two events or something that is temporary.	In the interim, she'll be handling your responsibilities.
In the long run	Over a period of time.	In the long run, this plan will save us money.
In the nick of time.	Just before it is too late.	We got there in the nick of time—the movie just started.
In the red	In debt with your bank. To have a negative bank balance or to owe money to the bank.	The company is deep in the red after a rough quarter.
In the right place at the right time	When something happens fortuitously or when given an unexpected opportunity.	He was in the right place at the right time and caught the winning shot.
In the wrong place at the wrong time	When something unlucky happens that would not normally have happened.	She was in the wrong place at the wrong time when the fight broke out.
In tune with someone (on the same wavelength)	Have the same ideas and be in agreement with someone else.	We're really in tune with each other—it makes working together easy.

It takes two to tango	Actions or communications need more than one person.	Don't blame just him—it takes two to tango.
Itchy feet	Strong impulse to travel or go somewhere.	She is getting itchy feet every summer.
Judge a book by its cover	Judge something primarily on appearance.	She seemed rude at first, but I was wrong — just goes to show you shouldn't judge a book by its cover.
Jump on the bandwagon	Join a popular trend or activity.	After everyone started investing in crypto, he decided to jump on the bandwagon too.
Keep an ear to the ground	Staying informed about everything	She always keeps an ear to the ground to stay updated on industry trends.
Keep something at bay	Keep something away or prevent something from happening.	He took vitamin C daily to keep the flu at bay.
Keeping up appearances	Maintaining an outward show of prosperity or well-being while hiding your difficulties.	They were struggling financially but kept up appearances for the neighbors.
Keeping your finger on the pulse	Being constantly aware of current developments.	A good manager keeps their finger on the pulse of the team's morale.
Kept in the dark	Not knowing the secrets or truth.	They were kept in the dark about the company's upcoming merger.
Kill time	Do something whilst waiting.	We played cards to kill time while waiting for our flight.
Kill two birds with one stone	Accomplish two different things at the same time.	She managed to visit her grandma and do some shopping — killing two birds with one stone.
Knit one's brows	Someone who pulls their eyebrows together when frustrated	He knit his brows in confusion as he read the instructions.
Landslide victory	Overwhelming victory.	The mayor was re-elected in a landslide victory.
Last straw	The final problem in a series of problems that leads to a bad thing happening.	When he forgot our anniversary, it was the last straw.
Laugh a minute	Someone or something that is very funny.	That comedy show was a laugh a minute.
Learn by rote	Learn something by memorising it without thought to what is being learnt.	In some schools, students still learn multiplication tables by rote.
Learn something off by heart	Memorise so well, that it can be written or recited without thinking.	I had to learn the speech off by heart for the competition.
Learn the ropes	Learn how to do a job or task properly.	It took me a few weeks to learn the ropes at my new job.
Left out in the cold	Being ignored	After the merger, many employees were left out in the cold.

Lemon	New vehicle that has many faults.	The car turned out to be a lemon and broke down after two weeks.
Let me see the colour of your money	Prove that you can afford something.	The landlord said, 'Let me see the colour of your money before you move in.'
Let sleeping dogs lie	Leave a situation undisturbed, since it would otherwise result in trouble or complications.	We decided not to bring up the old argument — best to let sleeping dogs lie.
Let slip through fingers	Failing to obtain or retain a good opportunity.	I let a great job opportunity slip through my fingers.
Let the cat out of the bag	Share information that was previously concealed.	He let the cat out of the bag about the surprise party.
Lick one's wounds	Trying to regain confidence after a defeat.	After losing the match, the team went home to lick their wounds.
Lightning fast	Very fast.	She typed her report at lightning-fast speed.
Lights are on but nobody is home	Someone is stupid or lacking intelligence.	He stared blankly at the screen — the lights were on, but nobody was home.
Like clockwork	Happens at very regular times or intervals without fail.	The train arrives at 7:30 every day like clockwork.
Like there's no tomorrow	Do something fast or energetic, as if it were the last opportunity to do so.	He was eating like there's no tomorrow.
Lining up all the ducks in a row	Being well organised in preparation for something.	Before launching the product, we had to get all our ducks in a row.
Living beyond your means	Spending more than you can afford.	Buying that luxury car was living beyond his means.
Living in an ivory tower	Living a lifestyle that saves or obscures you from real world issues.	The professor's ideas show he's living in an ivory tower.
Living on the breadline	Having very little income.	After losing his job, he was living on the breadline.
Long arm of the law	Far-reaching power of the authorities.	He thought he could escape, but the long arm of the law caught up with him.
Long time no see	Not seen since long ago.	Hey, stranger! Long time no see!
Look on the bright side	View an unpleasant situation in a positive light.	We missed the train, but look on the bright side — we got more time together.
Love at first sight	Start feeling love towards someone the first time you see them.	For them, it was love at first sight.
Lovey-dovey	Making an excessive display of affection.	They were acting all lovey-dovey at dinner.

Lump in your throat	Tight feeling in the through because of an emotion like sadness, pride or gratitude.	He had a lump in his throat as he said goodbye.
Make a long story short	Come to the point without superfluous or unnecessary details.	To make a long story short, we got lost and ended up missing the show.
Make my day	Something that makes me very happy or satisfies me.	Finding a letter from her really made my day.
Make or break	Circumstances causing total success or total failure.	This interview could be the make-or-break moment of his career.
Make the grade	Be satisfactory or at an accepted level.	She worked hard and finally made the grade.
Make time	Find time to do something as a priority.	You need to make time for your health.
Makes your flesh crawl	Something that makes you feel disgusted or nervous.	The thought of spiders makes my flesh crawl.
Making a go of it	Attempting to succeed at something.	They're trying to make a go of their new business.
Making good time	Completing something faster than expected.	We're making good time — we'll get there before sunset.
Making headway	Making progress in what you are trying to do.	The team is finally making headway on the project.
Match made in heaven	Relationship that is likely to be happy and successful.	Those two are a match made in heaven.
Method to my madness	Despite one's approach seeming random, there actually is structure to it.	It may seem chaotic, but there's a method to my madness.
Mile a minute	Happens very quickly.	She talks a mile a minute when she's excited.
Miss the boat	Miss a chance or opportunity.	I didn't apply in time and missed the boat.
Monkey business	Mischievous or deceitful behaviour.	There's been some monkey business with the accounts.
Month of Sundays	A very long period of time.	It took a month of Sundays to finish that novel.
Murphy's law	Anything that can go wrong will go wrong.	Of course the printer broke today — Murphy's law.
Never in a million years	Will never happen.	Never in a million years did I expect to win.
No time like the present	The belief it is better to do something right away instead of waiting.	Let's start now — there's no time like the present.
No time to lose	Start something right away, otherwise it won't be finished on time.	We've got a deadline — there's no time to lose.
Not letting grass grow under your feet	Not delaying in getting something done.	She got a job offer and moved the next day — not letting the grass grow under her feet.
Not letting moss grow over	Doing something now or without delay.	He was constantly moving — not letting moss grow over.

Not playing with a full deck	Lacking intelligence.	He believes he's a superhero — not playing with a full deck.
Now and then (or again)	Occasionally.	I like to treat myself to cake now and then.
Now or never	Something that should be done now or it will never be done.	This is your shot — it's now or never!
Off colour	Unwell.	He looked a bit off colour and said he might be coming down with something.
Off one's rocker	Crazy; demented; out of one's mind; in a confused or befuddled state of mind; senile.	She must be off her rocker to quit such a great job.
Off to a flying start	Something that is immediately successful or has begun well.	The event got off to a flying start with record attendance.
Old hand	Person with a lot of experience in something.	He's an old hand at fixing cars.
Old school	Holding ideas that were popular and important in the past but which are no longer so.	My dad's pretty old school when it comes to music.
On cloud nine	Being very happy	She was on cloud nine after the proposal.
On the ball	When someone understands the situation well or is doing well.	We need someone on the ball to manage this task.
On the brain	Thinking or talking about something constantly.	Lately, she's had travel on the brain.
On the rocks	Relationship experiencing problems.	Their relationship is on the rocks.
On time	Not being late or something happening at the expected time.	The meeting started right on time.
Once in a blue moon	Happens very rarely or once in a lifetime.	He visits us once in a blue moon.
Once upon a time	Something that happened a long time ago.	Once upon a time, there was a small village...
Only time will tell	The truth, answer or result, will be revealed at some future point.	Only time will tell if this plan works.
Out of the blue	Appear suddenly from nowhere and without warning.	She called me out of the blue after five years.
Out of the red	No longer in debt.	We're finally out of the red and making a profit.
Out of time	No time left to do something or a set time has been reached.	We ran out of time and couldn't finish the test.
Paint the town red	Go out and have a really good time at a party.	Let's go out and paint the town red tonight!
Pass with flying colours	Pass with a high score.	He passed his exams with flying colours.
Penny for your thoughts	A way of asking what someone is thinking.	You've been quiet — a penny for your thoughts?
Picture paints a thousand words	Visual presentations are far more descriptive than words.	This photo says it all — a picture paints a thousand words.

Pie in the Sky	An unrealistic or impossible goal or dream	Universal basic income still feels like pie in the sky.
Piece of cake	A job, task or other activity that is easy or simple.	That test was a piece of cake.
Pitch black	Very dark with zero or almost zero visibility.	The cave was pitch black inside.
Place in the sun	A position that provides you all the success and happiness you want.	After years of hard work, he finally found his place in the sun.
Pop the question	Propose marriage to someone.	He popped the question during dinner.
Pot calling the kettle black	Hypocritically criticise or accuse someone else is as guilty as the person criticising.	You're calling me messy? That's the pot calling the kettle black.
Pressed for time	Being rushed or not having enough time to complete something.	Sorry, I can't chat — I'm pressed for time.
Proud as a peacock	Very proud	He was proud as a peacock after getting the award.
Pull the plug	Terminate or discontinue something.	They had to pull the plug on the project due to budget cuts.
Pull wool over other people's eyes	Deceive someone into thinking well of them.	He tried to pull the wool over our eyes, but we caught on.
Pulling out all the stops	Doing everything you can to make something happen.	We're pulling out all the stops for the wedding.
Punch above one's weight	Performing beyond your ability.	Their small company is punching above its weight in the industry.
Puppy love	Temporary infatuation between young people.	Their relationship was just puppy love, but it felt real at the time.
Put it in black and white	Write down for confirmation or evidence.	I want this agreement in black and white.
Put your thinking cap on	Engage your mind and think in a serious manner.	Let's put our thinking caps on and find a solution.
Rags to riches	Becoming very rich whilst starting very poor.	His is a true rags-to-riches story.
Raining cats and dogs	Raining very heavily.	We couldn't go out — it was raining cats and dogs.
Raise the white flag	Accept defeat and surrender to the other party.	We finally raised the white flag and asked for help.
Raring to go	Being very eager or enthusiastic about the idea.	We've packed and we're raring to go!
Rat race	Exhausting and repetitive routine.	After ten years in the corporate rat race, she moved to a small town to slow down.

Red flag	Signal or indication that something is not working properly or correctly. Bad sign.	His refusal to answer basic questions was a red flag during the interview.
Red herring	Unimportant matter that misleads and draws attention away.	The subplot about the missing cat turned out to be a red herring.
Red hot	New and exciting, creating much demand.	Tickets to the concert were red hot and sold out in minutes.
Red in the face	Embarrassed.	He turned red in the face when he realized he was on mute the entire call.
Red tape	Set of rules and/or regulations that slow or stop progress.	We couldn't get the license due to all the government red tape.
Red-eye	Journey that leaves late in the night and arrives early in the morning.	We caught a red-eye flight so we could be in New York by morning.
Road hog	Dangerous driver.	That road hog nearly ran me off the highway!
Roll out the red carpet	Greet a person with great respect and give them a big, warm welcome.	They really rolled out the red carpet for the celebrity guests.
Run around in circles	Putting efforts into something that is not a worthwhile result	I spent the whole day running around in circles trying to fix the printer.
Sail through something	Being successful as something without difficulty.	She sailed through the exam without breaking a sweat.
Save time	Do something quickly or in a way that allow time for other things.	Ordering groceries online really saves time.
School of hard knocks	Learning through difficult experiences, as opposed to formal, classroom education.	He never went to college — he learned everything from the school of hard knocks.
School of thought	Particular philosophy or way of thinking about something.	One school of thought says early risers are more productive.
Schoolboy error	Very basic or foolish mistake.	Forgetting to attach the document was a schoolboy error.
Scrape the barrel	Making the most of the worst situations or things	We were scraping the barrel for ideas by the end of the meeting.
Seeing eye to eye	Two or more people agree on something.	They finally saw eye to eye on the budget.
Seeing red	React with uncontrollable rage.	He was seeing red after hearing about the mistake.
Sell ice to Eskimos	Persuade people to go against their best interests or to accept something unnecessary.	He's such a smooth talker, he could sell ice to Eskimos.
Sell like hot cakes	Quick sellout	Her handmade candles are selling like hot cakes.

Shelf life	The expected duration of lifespan of something (typically food, drink or medicine).	This sauce has a shelf life of six months once opened.
Show of hands	Raising hands to vote about something.	Let's do a quick show of hands to vote on the venue.
Shown the red card	Dismissed or told to leave.	He was shown the red card after that foul.
Silver screen	Film industry	He dreams of making it to the silver screen one day.
Single file	Line of people with one person standing behind another.	Please walk in single file through the hallway.
Sink or swim	Fail or succeed.	They threw me into the role with no training — it was sink or swim.
Sinking teeth into something	Doing something with a lot of energy and enthusiasm.	I can't wait to sink my teeth into this new project.
Sit on the fence	Unable or unwilling to choose or make a decision.	You can't sit on the fence forever — pick a side.
Skip class	Not go to school when you should.	He used to skip class and hang out at the arcade.
Sleeping (or silent) partner	Person who has put money into a business or venture but who is not involved in running it.	She's just a silent partner and doesn't get involved in operations.
Slice of the pie	Share of something, such as money, profits, etc.	He wanted a bigger slice of the pie after the company went public.
Smash hit	A big success.	Their new app was a smash hit in the first week.
Snowed under	Having too much to do.	I'm snowed under with work and can't take on anything else.
Sooner or later	Something is certain to happen but it isn't known when exactly.	Sooner or later, the truth always comes out.
Sour grapes	Pretending to dislike something you cannot have.	His comments about the winner seemed like sour grapes.
Spanner in the works	Suddenly disrupt something by introducing something unexpected or unwanted.	The last-minute change threw a spanner in the works.
Speak of the devil	When the person you have just been talking about arrives.	Speak of the devil — we were just talking about you!
Speaks volumes	Express a reaction without words.	His silence speaks volumes.
Spill the beans	Reveal a secret.	He accidentally spilled the beans about the surprise party.

Standing ground	Maintaining your position	Despite pressure, she stood her ground on the issue.
Standing the test of time	Something that lasts or continues to work well for a long time.	That novel has truly stood the test of time.
Steal someone's thunder	Take the credit for something someone else did.	She announced her pregnancy right after mine — totally stole my thunder!
Stiff upper lip	Not showing emotions.	Despite the bad news, he kept a stiff upper lip.
Storm in a teacup	Exaggerate a problem.	Their argument over the chair was just a storm in a teacup.
Straight from the horse's mouth	From the authoritative source.	I heard it straight from the horse's mouth — she's quitting.
Stuck in a time warp	Not changed for a very long time, when everything else around has.	Their living room looks stuck in a time warp from the 70s.
Swallow one's pride	Accepting something humiliating or embarrassing.	He had to swallow his pride and ask for help.
Sweet tooth	Liking for sweet-tasting foods.	She has such a sweet tooth — she can't resist chocolate.
Take each day as it comes	Deal with things as and when they happen.	After the diagnosis, he learned to take each day as it comes.
Take with a grain (or pinch) of salt	Not to take what someone says too seriously. Be sceptical about something.	Take his advice with a grain of salt — he's not an expert.
Taste of your own medicine	Something happens to you, or is done to you, that you have done to someone else.	He was rude and finally got a taste of his own medicine.
Teacher's pet	Teacher's favourite student.	He's such the teacher's pet — always helping after class.
The big time	The top level of a profession	She finally made it to the big time with her Broadway debut.
The moment of truth	When an important decision is made or the truth about something is revealed.	It was the moment of truth — time to present our project.
The ship has sailed	A particular opportunity has passed and is no longer available.	I wanted to apply, but the ship has sailed.
The time is ripe	The right or most opportune moment to do something.	The time is ripe to launch our new product.
Thinking on your feet	Adjusting quickly to change and making fast decisions.	You'll need to think on your feet during the debate.
This day and age	These or modern times.	In this day and age, you'd expect faster internet.

Tickled pink	Very pleased, thrilled or delighted about something.	She was tickled pink by the surprise visit.
Tie the knot	Get married.	They're planning to tie the knot next summer.
Time after time (time and time again)	Do something repeatedly	Time after time, he forgets his keys.
Time flies	When time passes quickly.	Time flies when you're having fun!
Time for a change	Stop what you are doing and start doing something else.	After 20 years, it felt like time for a change.
Time heals all wounds (or time is a great healer)	Feelings of hurt (usually emotional) will go away after some time has passed.	Give it time — time heals all wounds.
Time is money	Time is a valuable commodity. Payment is needed before doing something.	Let's not waste time — time is money.
Time is of the essence	When meeting a deadline is very important or critical.	We need to act now — time is of the essence.
Time of one's life	A time when someone is enjoying themselves.	We had the time of our lives at the festival.
Time on one's hands (or side)	When you can afford to wait before doing or achieving something.	He took up painting with all the time on his hands.
Tongue-tied	Difficulty in expressing yourself because of nervousness or embarrassment.	He was tongue-tied when asked to speak on stage.
Too much (free) time on one's hand	When someone doesn't have enough to do.	He started making weird videos — clearly has too much time on his hands.
Top banana	Most important person in a group.	He's the top banana around here — nothing gets done without his say.
Top dog	Most important person.	Apple remains the top dog in the smartphone market.
Tough cookie	Very determined person.	She's a tough cookie — don't underestimate her.
Tricks of the trade	Clever or expert way of doing something.	He taught me a few tricks of the trade.
True colours	Someone's actual character.	She showed her true colours when things got tough.
Turn back the hands of time	Reverse something or go back to a time in the past.	I wish I could turn back the hands of time and fix things.
Under the weather	Not feeling good	I'm feeling a bit under the weather today.
University of life	Daily life and work where you learn more than you would through formal education.	He never studied formally — he graduated from the university of life.
Until hell freezes over	Something that will never happen..	I'll support her until hell freezes over.
Up in arms	Being grumpy or angry about something	Residents are up in arms over the proposed changes.
Up in smoke	Something that ends before getting a result.	All our plans went up in smoke after the storm.

Waiting in the wings	Waiting for an opportunity to take action.	She's been waiting in the wings for a chance to shine.
Walk out on someone	Leave a partner and end the relationship.	He walked out on her after ten years of marriage.
Wasting time	Doing something with no purpose.	Stop wasting time and get to work.
Well-oiled machine	Unit of people or a group of things working well together.	The new kitchen staff works like a well-oiled machine.
Whale of a time	Enjoying something thoroughly.	We had a whale of a time on vacation.
White as a sheet (or ghost)	In a state of great fear or anxiety.	He turned white as a sheet when he saw the bill.
White collar	Officer worker.	He works a typical white-collar job in finance.
White elephant	Expensive item that's costly to maintain and not particularly useful.	The stadium became a white elephant after the games ended.
White lie	Little or harmless lie told to be polite and avoid hurting someone's feelings.	I told a white lie to avoid hurting her feelings.
Whitewash	Cover up or gloss over faults.	The investigation felt like a whitewash.
Whole nine yards	Everything. All of it.	We're going the whole nine yards for the wedding.
With bells on	When you are delighted and eager to go somewhere.	If there's a party, I'll be there with bells on!
Wooden spoon	Imaginary prize for the last person in a race.	Our team got the wooden spoon this season.
Works like a charm	Works very well or as expected.	This recipe works like a charm every time.
Wouldn't be caught dead	Would never like to do something.	I wouldn't be caught dead wearing that outfit.
Year in, year out	Happens every year for many years in a row.	He visits that cabin year in, year out.
Yellow-bellied	Coward	He's too yellow-bellied to confront his boss.
You can't teach an old dog new tricks	People used to doing things a certain way are often unable to change their ways.	Don't bother — you can't teach an old dog new tricks.
Your guess is as good as mine	I do not know	Who'll win the election? Your guess is as good as mine.