

# ENGLISH IDIOMS

## *Ancient Greeks*

Achilles' heel	a chip off the old block	cloud cuckoo land	draconian
eat your heart out	grasp the nettle	halcyon days	Herculean task
lily-livered	the lion's share	Midas touch	mountain out of a molehill
no holds barred	Pandora's box	silver bullet	sour grapes
square the circle	takes the cake	to harp on	Trojan horse

## *The Bible*

apple of one's eye	bite the dust	bitter end	by the skin of one's teeth
crocodile tears	a cross to bear	an eye for an eye	see eye to eye
fly in the ointment	give up the ghost	lamb to the slaughter	a nest of vipers
no rest for the wicked	reap what you sow	salt of the earth	scapegoat
strait and narrow	one's wit's end	woe is me	the writing's on the wall

## *Georgians (1714-1830)*

an albatross around the neck	brand new	bull in a china shop	chestnut
claptrap	cold shoulder	cool as a cucumber	crack a bottle
dark horse	draw a blank	dressed to the nines	doldrums
elephant in the room	fly-by-night	goody two-shoes	in the limelight
ivory tower	knuckle down	tared with the same brush	thick as thieves

## *Middle Ages (5000AD-1700AD)*

all thumbs	beat about the bush	bee in your bonnet	beyond the pale
bigwig	Bob's your uncle	bolt upright	bury the hatchet
cut and dried	cotton on	curry a favour	different kettle of fish
fit as a fiddle	fools rush in	guinea pig	higgledy-piggledy
hedge one's bets	helter skelter	humble pie	I'll eat my hat
jiggery-pokery	last laugh	mumbo jumbo	nose to the grindstone
pigs might fly	pleased as punch	point blank	raining cats and dogs
red herring	red tape	rose coloured glasses	sent to Coventry
sixes and sevens	spruced up	steal someone's thunder	tenterhooks
to a 't'	turn over a new leaf	turn up for the books	willy-nilly



## North American

acid test	an axe to grind	back to the drawing board	barking up the wrong tree
bee's knees	bootlegger	cuts the mustard	fly off the handle
Gordon Bennett	the grapevine	the gravy train	happy as a clam
heebie-jeebies	hunky-dory	jump on the bandwagon	keeping up with the Joneses
maverick	nitty gritty	skid row	the drop of a hat

## Romans

a bolt from the blue	Absence Make the heart Grow Fonder	bury your head in the sand	the die is cast
Dog Days	draw a line in the sand	ears are burning	Get the Upper Hand
head over heels	in a nutshell	lucky break	parting shot
purple patch	seize the day	storm in a teacup	swan song
when in Rome, do as the Romans do	with a pinch of salt	worth one's salt	wrong side of the bed

## Shakespeare

at loggerheads	bated breath	be-all and end-all	break the ice
charmed life	green-eyed monster	heart of gold	kill with kindness
lie low	love is blind	mum's the word	night owl
at one fell swoop	sea change	short shrift	tit for tat
wear your heart upon your sleeve	wild goose chase	the world's your oyster	you've got to be cruel to be kind

## Victorian

bite the bullet	by a long chalk	close but no cigar	hiding to nothing
knee-jerk	led up the garden path	march to a different drum	ships that pass in the night
skeleton in the closet	spitting feathers	up to scratch	law of the jungle
silver lining	mad as a hatter	the life of Reilly	bats in the belfry
two shakes of a lamb's tail	a field day	paint the town red	the real McCoy

## Vikings

berserk	be enthralled	cut off your nose to spite your face	egg on
fine fettle	pay through the nose	scot-free	spick and span

## World Wars

AWOL	blockbuster	go dolally	ground zero
gung-ho	having a chat	old blighty	on a wing and a prayer
over the top	pie in the sky	pushing up daisies	shell-shock

## **ANIMAL IDIOMS**

- A little birdie told me (Someone told me a secret)
- Birdbrain (Someone who is not very smart)
- Busy as a bee (To be very active and working hard at something)
- Cat got your tongue? (Why aren't you talking?)
- Curiosity killed the cat (Asking too many questions may get you in trouble)
- Different kettle of fish (Something completely different)
- Doggy bag (A bag to take home leftovers from a restaurant)
- Fish out of water (Being somewhere you don't belong)
- For the birds (Something that is not worth anything)
- Get off your high horse (Quit thinking you are better than others)
- Goose is cooked (Now you're in trouble)
- Hold your horses (Wait a minute)
- Horse of a different color (Something that is quite different, a separate issue)
- Hot dog (A person doing athletic stunts that are dangerous)
- Let the cat out of the bag (Tell a secret)
- Pig out - (To eat a lot)
- Put a bug in his ear (Make a suggestion)
- Snail's pace (To move extremely slow)
- Stir a hornet's nest (To cause a lot of trouble)
- Teacher's pet (The teacher's favorite student)
- Wolf in sheep's clothing (A person who pretends to be nice but is not)
- You can't teach an old dog new tricks (It's harder for older people to learn new things)

## **BODY PART IDIOMS**

- Cross your fingers (For good luck)
- Fell on deaf ears (People wouldn't listen to something)
- Get cold feet (Be nervous)
- Have a change of heart (Changed your mind)
- I'm all ears (You have my full attention)
- It cost an arm and a leg (It was expensive)
- Play it by ear (Improvise)
- See eye to eye (Agree)
- Slipped my mind (I forgot)
- Speak your mind (Say what you really feel)

## **OTHER EVERYDAY IDIOMS**

- A grey area (Something unclear)
- A rip-off (Too expensive)
- Add fuel to the fire (To add more to an existing problem)
- As easy as ABC (Something is very easy)
- Call it a day (Time to quit)
- Crack a book (Open up a book and study)
- Down to the wire (At the last minute)
- Fill in the blanks (Provide more information)
- Get a kick out of it (Really enjoy/like something)
- Get your act together (Behave properly)
- Give it a shot (To try to do something)
- Have mixed feelings (Be unsure of how you feel)
- Have second thoughts (Have doubts)
- In hot water (Be in trouble)
- In the same boat (Be in the same situation)
- It's in the bag (It's a certainty)
- I've got your number (To say you can't be fooled by someone since you have them figured out)
- Miss the boat (You missed your chance)
- Pass with flying colors (To succeed at something easily)
- Piece of cake (Something very easy)
- Read between the lines (Find the hidden meaning)
- Second to none (The best)
- The icing on the cake (Something additional that turns good into great)