

COMMON IDIOMS

IDIOM	MEANING	USE
Crocodile tears:	insincere tears (Crocodiles are said to cry when eating their prey.)	When the football player broke his leg, his substitute wept crocodile tears .
To go up in smoke:	to come to no practical result (Kindling smokes but will not light a fire.)	The mayor's plans to get the presidential nomination went up in smoke when she couldn't end the workers' strike.
To throw down the gauntlet:	to challenge someone (When the gauntlet, or medieval glove, was thrown down, the challenger was required to pick it up.)	The principal of our rival school threw down the gauntlet , and we had no choice but to accept the challenge.
To pass the buck:	to avoid responsibility (The "buck" may have been a piece of buckshot passed from one poker player to another to keep track of whose turn it was to deal.)	He always gives a serious answer and never tries to pass the buck .
Red-letter day:	a day of happiness (Holidays are red-letter days on our calendars.)	My red-letter day came when I was chosen as senior class president.
To let sleeping dogs lie:	to avoid stirring up old hostilities	The lawyer wanted to open up the old case, but her partner advised her to let sleeping dogs lie .
Through the grapevine:	secret means of spreading information.	I heard it through the grapevine that John will be elected class president.
To have the upper hand:	to gain control	I had him at my mercy, but now he has the upper hand .
To turn the tables:	to turn a situation to your own advantage	My opponent thought that I could be easily pinned down, but I turned the tables on him and won the match.
To be at large:	to be unconfined, not in jail	It was reported that several dangerous criminals were at large in the city.

To go against the flow:	to be unique	It was clear from the different way he dressed that he preferred to go against the flow .
To know the ropes:	to know your way around	The student tour guide knew the ropes and quickly showed me the way around school.
Tongue in cheek:	insincerely	Speaking with his tongue in cheek , the cheap employer promised to double everyone's wages.
To get one's back up:	to become angry	Every time his mother mentioned getting a haircut, the long-haired musician got his back up .
To sleep on it:	postpone making a decision	Since she could not decide which university to attend, she decided to sleep on it for a few more days.
To break the ice:	to start a conversation between strangers	Most speakers break the ice by telling a joke or talking about the weather
To pull one's weight:	do a fair share of the work	Everyone in a farming family has to pull their own weight at harvest time, when the crops are ready.
To go out on a limb:	to take a risk	The journalist really went out on a limb when he published the story exposing his employer's dishonest dealings.
To give a cold shoulder:	to ignore	After having an argument, the two friends gave each other the cold shoulder for over a week.
Hook, line and sinker:	completely	He fell in love with her, hook, line and sinker .
To be on pins and needles:	to be nervous	He was on pins and needles while waiting for the results from his test.
To be worth one's weight in gold:	to be extremely useful	The director claims that her new, efficient secretary is worth her weight in gold .
To make ends meet:	to manage expenses with a small income	It is difficult to make ends meet on a small salary.