

100 idiomatic expressions with meaning

Idiomatic expressions are phrases whose meanings cannot be understood from the literal definitions of the words that comprise them. They enrich the language, making communication more vivid and engaging. Understanding idioms is crucial for both language learners and native speakers alike as they often convey complex ideas in a concise way. In this article, we will explore 100 idiomatic expressions along with their meanings, providing a resource for anyone looking to enhance their understanding of English.

Common Idiomatic Expressions

1-10

1. Bite the bullet - To do something painful or unpleasant that is unavoidable.
2. Break the ice - To initiate conversation in a social setting, making people feel more comfortable.
3. Burn the midnight oil - To stay up late working or studying.
4. Caught between a rock and a hard place - To be faced with two difficult choices.
5. Cost an arm and a leg - To be very expensive.
6. Cut corners - To do something in the easiest or cheapest way, often compromising quality.
7. Hit the nail on the head - To describe exactly what is causing a situation or problem.
8. Let the cat out of the bag - To reveal a secret or disclose information unintentionally.
9. Once in a blue moon - Something that happens very rarely.
10. Piece of cake - A task that is very easy to complete.

11-20

11. Put all your eggs in one basket - To risk everything on a single venture.
12. Raining cats and dogs - To rain heavily.
13. Spill the beans - To disclose secret information.
14. The ball is in your court - It's up to you to make the next decision or take action.
15. Throw in the towel - To give up or admit defeat.
16. Under the weather - To feel ill or unwell.
17. When pigs fly - Refers to something that will never happen.
18. Your guess is as good as mine - To have no idea about something.
19. A blessing in disguise - Something that seems bad at first but results in something good.
20. Burning the candle at both ends - To overwork oneself by doing too much, often leading to exhaustion.

Idioms Related to Work and Business

21-30

- 21. Back to the drawing board - To start over after a failure.
- 22. Barking up the wrong tree - To make a false assumption or pursue the wrong course of action.
- 23. Call it a day - To stop working for the day.
- 24. Get the ball rolling - To start an activity or project.
- 25. In the driver's seat - To be in control of a situation.
- 26. Keep your nose to the grindstone - To work hard and diligently.
- 27. On the same page - To have a shared understanding or agreement.
- 28. Pulling your weight - To contribute your fair share of work.
- 29. Think outside the box - To think creatively and unconventionally.
- 30. Take the bull by the horns - To confront a difficult situation directly.

31-40

- 31. Climbing the corporate ladder - Advancing in one's career.
- 32. Cutting-edge - Referring to the latest technology or ideas.
- 33. Get your foot in the door - To gain initial entry into an opportunity or profession.
- 34. Jumping through hoops - To go through a lot of effort or difficulty to achieve something.
- 35. Learning the ropes - To learn how to do a job or task.
- 36. Moving the goalposts - Changing the rules or criteria for success.
- 37. Not playing with a full deck - To imply someone is not very intelligent or is acting irrationally.
- 38. Putting out feelers - To make informal inquiries to gauge interest.
- 39. Reinventing the wheel - To waste time creating something that already exists.
- 40. Throwing good money after bad - To continue investing in a losing endeavor.

Idioms Expressing Emotion

41-50

- 41. At the end of your rope - To be at the limit of your patience or endurance.
- 42. Beating around the bush - To avoid getting to the point of an issue.
- 43. Cry over spilled milk - To be upset about something that cannot be changed.
- 44. Feeling under the weather - To feel sick or unwell.
- 45. Have a chip on your shoulder - To hold a grudge or feel resentment.
- 46. In a pickle - To be in a difficult or challenging situation.

- 47. Jump for joy - To be extremely happy.
- 48. Keep your chin up - To remain cheerful in a difficult situation.
- 49. On cloud nine - To be very happy.
- 50. Walking on eggshells - To be very cautious about how you speak or act around someone.

51-60

- 51. A dime a dozen - Very common and not special.
- 52. Bite off more than you can chew - To take on more responsibility than you can handle.
- 53. Face the music - To confront the consequences of your actions.
- 54. In hot water - To be in trouble.
- 55. Jumping for joy - To be extremely happy.
- 56. Keep your eyes peeled - To remain alert and watchful.
- 57. Like a fish out of water - To feel uncomfortable or out of place.
- 58. Out of the blue - Something that happens unexpectedly.
- 59. Put a sock in it - To tell someone to be quiet.
- 60. Sweating bullets - To be very nervous or anxious.

Idioms Related to Time

61-70

- 61. A stitch in time saves nine - Fixing a small problem promptly prevents it from becoming a larger one.
- 62. Better late than never - It's better to do something late than not do it at all.
- 63. Caught red-handed - To be caught in the act of doing something wrong.
- 64. Every cloud has a silver lining - There is something good in every bad situation.
- 65. Time flies when you're having fun - Time seems to pass quickly when you are enjoying yourself.
- 66. The early bird catches the worm - Those who act promptly and decisively have an advantage.
- 67. Time is money - Time wasted is money lost.
- 68. To kill time - To spend time doing something unimportant while waiting.
- 69. Your days are numbered - Someone is close to death or misfortune.
- 70. Until the cows come home - For a very long time.

71-80

- 71. A watched pot never boils - Time seems to pass slowly when you are waiting for something.
- 72. Bide your time - To wait patiently for the right moment to act.
- 73. In the nick of time - Just in time; at the last possible moment.
- 74. Make hay while the sun shines - To take advantage of favorable conditions while they last.

- 75. On borrowed time - Living with a limited amount of time left.
- 76. The clock is ticking - Time is running out.
- 77. Time heals all wounds - Emotional pain diminishes with time.
- 78. To have all the time in the world - To have plenty of time to do something.
- 79. To put something on the back burner - To delay or postpone something.
- 80. To take your time - To do something slowly without hurrying.

Unique and Lesser-Known Idioms

81-90

- 81. A penny for your thoughts - A way of asking someone what they are thinking.
- 82. Burning the midnight oil - To stay up late working or studying.
- 83. Caught flat-footed - To be caught off guard or unprepared.
- 84. Every dog has its day - Everyone will have a moment of success or recognition.
- 85. Get your act together - To organize yourself or your affairs.
- 86. In the same boat - To be in the same situation as someone else.
- 87. Let sleeping dogs lie - To avoid interfering in a situation that could cause trouble.
- 88. On the fence - To be undecided about something.
- 89. Throw caution to the wind - To take a risk without worrying about the consequences.
- 90. You can't judge a book by its cover - Don't judge someone or something based solely on appearances.

91-100

- 91. A leopard can't change its spots - A person cannot change their inherent nature.
- 92. Barking up the wrong tree - To make a false assumption.
- 93. Break a leg - A way to wish someone good luck, especially in performances.
- 94. Curiosity killed the cat - Asking too many questions can lead to trouble.
- 95. Don

Frequently Asked Questions

What are idiomatic expressions?

Idiomatic expressions are phrases or expressions whose meanings cannot be understood from the literal definitions of the words that make them up.

Can you give an example of an idiomatic expression?

Sure! 'Kick the bucket' is an idiomatic expression that means to die.

Why are idiomatic expressions important in language?

They enrich the language, provide cultural context, and convey meanings in a more vivid and imaginative way.

How can idiomatic expressions vary between languages?

Idiomatic expressions often reflect cultural nuances and experiences unique to a language, making direct translations difficult.

What is the origin of the term 'idiom'?

The term 'idiom' comes from the Greek word 'idioma', which means 'special feature' or 'peculiarity'.

Are idiomatic expressions commonly used in everyday conversation?

Yes, idiomatic expressions are frequently used in everyday conversation and can make speech sound more natural and fluent.

How do idiomatic expressions contribute to language learning?

They enhance comprehension and speaking skills, as learners gain insights into cultural references and language flow.

What is the difference between an idiom and a proverb?

An idiom is a phrase with a figurative meaning, while a proverb is a short, commonly known saying that offers advice or wisdom.

Can idiomatic expressions change over time?

Yes, idiomatic expressions can evolve and new ones can emerge, reflecting changes in culture and society.

How many idiomatic expressions should one learn for effective communication?

While there's no set number, learning around 100 idiomatic expressions can significantly enhance communication skills in a new language.

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