

1000+ Idioms in English

Meanings and Example Sentences

1,036 unique idioms	Short meanings easy to scan	Natural examples clear context
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Educational PDF Book for English Learners

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How to Use This Book

Each entry shows the idiom, a short meaning, and one clear example sentence. Learn a few expressions at a time and notice how the idiom changes the meaning of the full sentence.

1. Read the idiom Notice the complete fixed expression.	2. Check the meaning Focus on the intended, non-literal meaning.
3. Read the example See how the expression works naturally in context.	4. Review by topic Use the contents page to jump to a useful category.

Layout note: Table rows are never compressed to force extra entries onto a page. Long entries wrap inside their own cells, and remaining rows continue naturally on the next page.

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1. Common Daily Use Idioms

40 idioms in this section. Meanings are kept short so the table stays easy to scan.

Idiom	Short Meaning	Example Sentence
A piece of cake	Very easy	The test was a piece of cake.
Break the ice	Start a friendly conversation	I told a joke to break the ice.
Call it a day	Stop working	We finished the report and called it a day.
Hang in there	Keep trying	Hang in there; things will improve.
Keep an eye on	Watch carefully	Please keep an eye on my bag.
No big deal	Not very important	Being five minutes late is no big deal.
So far, so good	Everything is going well until now	Our trip is going well - so far, so good.
Take it easy	Relax	You look tired, so take it easy.
Better late than never	Doing something late is better than not doing it	He finally apologized - better late than never.
Give it a shot	Try something	Give yoga a shot this weekend.
Go with the flow	Accept things as they happen	We had no plan and just went with the flow.
In no time	Very quickly	She finished the task in no time.
On the same page	Share the same understanding	We need to get everyone on the same page.
Make yourself at home	Feel comfortable	Come in and make yourself at home.
Out of the blue	Unexpectedly	He called me out of the blue.
Sleep on it	Decide after thinking overnight	I will sleep on it before answering.
Take your time	Do not hurry	Take your time with the form.
The sooner the better	As soon as possible	Send the documents today; the sooner the better.
Up to you	Your decision	We can eat here or leave; it is up to you.
Worth a try	Deserving an attempt	The new method is worth a try.
Come in handy	Be useful	This flashlight may come in handy.
Get the hang of it	Learn how to do something	You will soon get the hang of driving.
Give me a hand	Help me	Could you give me a hand with this box?

Idiom	Short Meaning	Example Sentence
Have a good time	Enjoy yourself	We had a good time at the party.
Keep in touch	Continue communicating	Let us keep in touch after graduation.
Long time no see	Said after not meeting for a while	Long time no see! How have you been?
Make up your mind	Decide	Please make up your mind by Friday.
Never mind	Do not worry about it	Never mind; I found my keys.
Once in a while	Occasionally	We eat out once in a while.
Right away	Immediately	I will send the email right away.
Take a look	Look at something	Please take a look at this picture.
Take turns	Do something one after another	The children took turns using the swing.
Think twice	Consider carefully	Think twice before spending that much money.
Time flies	Time passes quickly	Time flies when we are having fun.
What a small world	Said after an unexpected connection	You know my cousin too? What a small world!
You can say that again	I strongly agree	It is hot today. You can say that again.
At the end of the day	When everything is considered	At the end of the day, your health matters most.
Back to square one	Start again	The plan failed, so we are back to square one.
Be my guest	Go ahead	Can I use this chair? Be my guest.
Easy does it	Do something slowly and carefully	Easy does it while carrying that glass.

2. Idioms About Time and Speed

40 idioms in this section. Meanings are kept short so the table stays easy to scan.

Idiom	Short Meaning	Example Sentence
Around the clock	All day and night	Doctors worked around the clock.
Against the clock	In a hurry before a deadline	We worked against the clock to finish.
At the eleventh hour	At the last possible moment	They reached an agreement at the eleventh hour.
Beat the clock	Finish before time runs out	We beat the clock by two minutes.
Better days ahead	A better future is coming	Stay hopeful; there are better days ahead.
Buy time	Gain extra time	She asked another question to buy time.
Call time on	Bring something to an end	Management called time on the project.
In the nick of time	Just before it is too late	We reached the station in the nick of time.
Kill time	Do something while waiting	I read a magazine to kill time.
Make up for lost time	Do more after a delay	We worked late to make up for lost time.
On borrowed time	Likely to end soon	The old machine is running on borrowed time.
Once in a blue moon	Very rarely	We eat at that restaurant once in a blue moon.
Time after time	Repeatedly	She has proved herself time after time.
Time is money	Time is valuable	Let us begin; time is money.
Time on your hands	Extra free time	I had plenty of time on my hands during vacation.
Ahead of time	Earlier than expected	We arrived ahead of time.
Behind the times	Old-fashioned	Their computer system is behind the times.
In due course	At the proper time	You will receive an answer in due course.
In the long run	Over a long period	Exercise helps you in the long run.
In the meantime	During the waiting period	Dinner is cooking; in the meantime, set the table.
Just in time	At exactly the needed time	The bus arrived just in time.
Old habits die hard	Habits are difficult to change	I still check paper maps; old habits die hard.
On time	At the planned time	The train arrived on time.
Pressed for time	Having little time	I cannot talk because I am pressed for time.

Idiom	Short Meaning	Example Sentence
Race against time	Hurry to finish something urgent	Rescuers faced a race against time.
Stand the test of time	Remain useful or popular for years	This song has stood the test of time.
Take forever	Take a very long time	This computer takes forever to start.
Time and again	Many times	I have warned him time and again.
Time will tell	The future will reveal the answer	Will the plan work? Time will tell.
At a snail's pace	Very slowly	Traffic was moving at a snail's pace.
In a flash	Very quickly	The bird disappeared in a flash.
In the blink of an eye	Extremely quickly	The weekend ended in the blink of an eye.
Like clockwork	Regularly and reliably	The bus arrives at eight like clockwork.
Not a moment too soon	Just before something bad happens	Help arrived not a moment too soon.
On the spur of the moment	Without advance planning	We booked the trip on the spur of the moment.
From day one	From the beginning	She supported the project from day one.
Day in, day out	Every day for a long time	He performs the same task day in, day out.
At the crack of dawn	Very early in the morning	We left at the crack of dawn.
For the time being	Temporarily	Stay here for the time being.
Have the time of your life	Enjoy yourself greatly	We had the time of our lives in Spain.

3. Work and Study Idioms

40 idioms in this section. Meanings are kept short so the table stays easy to scan.

Idiom	Short Meaning	Example Sentence
Hit the books	Study seriously	I need to hit the books tonight.
Learn the ropes	Learn how something works	It took her a week to learn the ropes.
Burn the midnight oil	Work or study late	He burned the midnight oil before the exam.
Know something inside out	Know something very well	She knows this software inside out.
Pass with flying colors	Succeed very well	He passed the exam with flying colors.
Put on your thinking cap	Think carefully	Put on your thinking cap and solve this puzzle.
Rack your brains	Think very hard	I racked my brains trying to remember his name.
Read between the lines	Find a hidden meaning	Read between the lines of her message.
Brush up on	Improve an old skill	I need to brush up on my French.
Crack a book	Begin studying	He rarely cracks a book before noon.
Know by heart	Remember completely	She knows the poem by heart.
Learn by heart	Memorize	Learn these words by heart.
School of hard knocks	Learning through difficult experience	He learned business in the school of hard knocks.
Teach someone a lesson	Make someone learn from a mistake	The fine taught him a lesson.
Put your nose to the grindstone	Work very hard	Put your nose to the grindstone this week.
Keep your nose to the grindstone	Continue working hard	She kept her nose to the grindstone until graduation.
Get down to business	Start serious work	Let us get down to business.
Get down to work	Begin working	We chatted briefly and then got down to work.
Do your homework	Prepare properly	Do your homework before the interview.
Make the grade	Reach the required standard	His work did not make the grade.
Cut class	Miss a lesson deliberately	He got in trouble for cutting class.
Skip school	Stay away from school without permission	They were caught skipping school.
Bookworm	Person who loves reading	Maya has always been a bookworm.

Idiom	Short Meaning	Example Sentence
Teacher's pet	Teacher's favorite student	Everyone thought Ben was the teacher's pet.
Know the drill	Know the usual procedure	You know the drill: sign in first.
Get your act together	Become organized	You need to get your act together before exams.
Pull your weight	Do your fair share	Everyone must pull their weight in the group.
Go the extra mile	Make extra effort	She always goes the extra mile for students.
Keep up the good work	Continue performing well	Your writing has improved; keep up the good work.
Work your fingers to the bone	Work extremely hard	They worked their fingers to the bone.
Have your work cut out	Face a difficult task	We have our work cut out for us today.
A steep learning curve	Something difficult to learn quickly	The new system has a steep learning curve.
Get up to speed	Learn enough to perform effectively	Give me a week to get up to speed.
On a learning curve	Still developing skill	New employees are still on a learning curve.
Put in the hours	Spend a lot of time working	You must put in the hours to improve.
Work like a dog	Work extremely hard	She worked like a dog all week.
All in a day's work	A normal part of a job	Difficult calls are all in a day's work.
Back to the drawing board	Start planning again	The design failed, so it is back to the drawing board.
Get the ball rolling	Start an activity	I sent the first email to get the ball rolling.
Keep the ball rolling	Maintain progress	We need more ideas to keep the ball rolling.

4. Success and Failure Idioms

40 idioms in this section. Meanings are kept short so the table stays easy to scan.

Idiom	Short Meaning	Example Sentence
Hit the jackpot	Have great success or luck	The company hit the jackpot with its new product.
Come out on top	Finish successfully	She faced strong competition but came out on top.
Go from strength to strength	Become increasingly successful	Their business is going from strength to strength.
Make a name for yourself	Become well known	She made a name for herself as a designer.
Make your mark	Achieve something noticeable	He wants to make his mark in science.
Reach for the stars	Aim for great success	Keep working and reach for the stars.
Rise to the occasion	Perform well under pressure	She rose to the occasion during the final.
Have the world at your feet	Be highly successful	After the award, she had the world at her feet.
On top of the world	Extremely happy and successful	I felt on top of the world after graduating.
Strike gold	Find unexpected success	The studio struck gold with the new series.
Turn the corner	Begin improving	Sales finally turned the corner.
A feather in your cap	An achievement to be proud of	Winning the scholarship is a feather in your cap.
Bear fruit	Produce good results	Their hard work finally bore fruit.
Come a long way	Make much progress	Your English has come a long way.
Go places	Become successful	Everyone believes that young artist will go places.
Make it big	Become very successful	He moved abroad hoping to make it big.
Move up in the world	Become more successful	She worked hard to move up in the world.
On the right track	Moving toward success	Your new plan is on the right track.
Pay off	Produce good results	All that practice paid off.
Smooth sailing	Easy progress without problems	After the first week, it was smooth sailing.
Fall flat	Fail to impress	His joke fell flat.
Go down in flames	Fail badly	The proposal went down in flames.
Miss the boat	Lose an opportunity	Apply now or you may miss the boat.

Idiom	Short Meaning	Example Sentence
Miss the mark	Fail to achieve the intended result	The campaign missed the mark.
Backfire	Produce the opposite result	His attempt to impress them backfired.
Bite the dust	Fail or be defeated	Another small company bit the dust.
Come unstuck	Fail after seeming successful	Their plan came unstuck at the final stage.
Drop the ball	Make a careless mistake	I dropped the ball by forgetting the deadline.
Fall at the first hurdle	Fail very early	The proposal fell at the first hurdle.
Go belly up	Fail completely, especially a business	The company went belly up last year.
Hit a dead end	Reach a point with no progress	Our investigation hit a dead end.
Lose ground	Become less successful	The team is losing ground to competitors.
Throw in the towel	Give up	Do not throw in the towel yet.
Try your luck	Attempt something uncertain	I decided to try my luck in the competition.
Win hands down	Win very easily	She won the contest hands down.
Have a winning streak	Win repeatedly	The team is on a winning streak.
Bounce back	Recover after failure	The business bounced back quickly.
Live to fight another day	Survive failure and try again	We lost this round but live to fight another day.
Get a second wind	Gain new energy	I got a second wind after lunch.
Learn the hard way	Learn through unpleasant experience	He learned the hard way not to ignore warnings.

5. Problems, Difficulties, and Risk Idioms

40 idioms in this section. Meanings are kept short so the table stays easy to scan.

Idiom	Short Meaning	Example Sentence
In hot water	In trouble	He is in hot water with his boss.
In deep water	In serious difficulty	The company is in deep water financially.
Between a rock and a hard place	Facing two difficult choices	I was caught between a rock and a hard place.
A tough nut to crack	Difficult problem or person	This puzzle is a tough nut to crack.
An uphill battle	A difficult struggle	Changing public opinion is an uphill battle.
Add fuel to the fire	Make a bad situation worse	His angry reply added fuel to the fire.
Open a can of worms	Create many new problems	That question opened a can of worms.
Out of the frying pan into the fire	Move from one problem to a worse one	He left one bad job and went out of the frying pan into the fire.
A storm in a teacup	Big argument about a small issue	The disagreement was only a storm in a teacup.
At your wits' end	Not know what to do	I was at my wits' end with the broken computer.
Bite off more than you can chew	Accept too much work	I bit off more than I could chew this month.
Have your hands full	Be very busy	She has her hands full with three projects.
In a bind	In a difficult situation	I am in a bind and need your help.
In a fix	In trouble	We are in a fix because the car will not start.
In a pickle	In a difficult situation	He is in a pickle after losing his passport.
Walking on thin ice	Taking a dangerous risk	You are walking on thin ice by ignoring the rules.
Play with fire	Take a dangerous risk	Investing everything in one deal is playing with fire.
Take your chances	Accept the risk	We had no reservation, so we took our chances.
Put all your eggs in one basket	Risk everything on one option	Do not put all your eggs in one basket.
A recipe for disaster	Situation likely to cause trouble	Driving tired is a recipe for disaster.
Trouble is brewing	Problems are developing	Trouble is brewing between the two teams.
Weather the storm	Survive a difficult period	The business managed to weather the storm.

Idiom	Short Meaning	Example Sentence
Ride out the storm	Endure a difficult period	We have enough savings to ride out the storm.
Dodge a bullet	Narrowly avoid trouble	We dodged a bullet when the flight was cancelled.
Out of the woods	Free from serious danger	The patient is not out of the woods yet.
The tip of the iceberg	Small visible part of a bigger problem	These complaints may be the tip of the iceberg.
A stumbling block	Something preventing progress	Cost became a major stumbling block.
Hit a snag	Encounter a problem	Our plans hit a snag.
A catch-22	Situation with conflicting conditions	Getting experience without a job is a catch-22.
Face the music	Accept unpleasant consequences	He must face the music after breaking the rules.
Bite the bullet	Face something difficult bravely	I bit the bullet and paid for the repair.
Grin and bear it	Accept discomfort without complaining	The room was hot, but we had to grin and bear it.
Take the bull by the horns	Deal with a problem directly	She took the bull by the horns and called the manager.
Cross that bridge when you come to it	Deal with a problem later	We will cross that bridge when we come to it.
Get to the bottom of	Discover the cause	We need to get to the bottom of this error.
Nip it in the bud	Stop a problem early	We should nip the conflict in the bud.
Put out fires	Deal with urgent problems	The manager spent all morning putting out fires.
Save the day	Prevent failure or disaster	Your backup copy saved the day.
A close call	A narrow escape	That falling branch was a close call.
Touch and go	Very uncertain	For several hours, the situation was touch and go.

6. Thinking, Ideas, and Decision-Making Idioms

40 idioms in this section. Meanings are kept short so the table stays easy to scan.

Idiom	Short Meaning	Example Sentence
Food for thought	Something worth thinking about	Her comments gave me food for thought.
Put two and two together	Understand from available clues	I put two and two together and realized he had left.
Think outside the box	Think creatively	We need to think outside the box.
A light-bulb moment	Sudden understanding	I had a light-bulb moment during the lesson.
Cross your mind	Enter your thoughts briefly	Did it ever cross your mind to call me?
Draw a blank	Fail to remember	I tried to remember her name but drew a blank.
Have second thoughts	Begin doubting a decision	I am having second thoughts about moving.
Keep in mind	Remember	Keep in mind that the shop closes early.
Lose your train of thought	Forget what you were saying	The noise made me lose my train of thought.
Make sense	Be understandable	Your explanation makes sense.
On second thought	After reconsidering	On second thought, I will stay home.
Off the top of your head	Without checking information	Can you name three examples off the top of your head?
Pick someone's brain	Ask someone for ideas or knowledge	Can I pick your brain about marketing?
Ring a bell	Seem familiar	That name rings a bell.
See the big picture	Understand the whole situation	Try to see the big picture.
Use your head	Think sensibly	Use your head before making a decision.
Wrap your head around	Understand something difficult	I cannot wrap my head around this formula.
Brainwave	Sudden good idea	She had a brainwave and redesigned the page.
Have a change of heart	Change your opinion or feeling	He had a change of heart and joined us.
Jump to conclusions	Decide without enough evidence	Do not jump to conclusions.
Make an informed decision	Decide using good information	Compare the options before making an informed decision.

Idiom	Short Meaning	Example Sentence
Sleep on a decision	Wait before deciding	I want to sleep on the decision.
Split hairs	Argue about tiny differences	We are splitting hairs over wording.
Take something into account	Consider something	We must take cost into account.
Weigh your options	Compare choices carefully	She is weighing her options.
Have something in mind	Have an idea or plan	I have a different design in mind.
Know what makes someone tick	Understand someone's motivation	She knows what makes her customers tick.
Not have a clue	Know nothing about something	I do not have a clue where he went.
Put your mind to it	Focus on achieving something	You can learn it if you put your mind to it.
Make heads or tails of	Understand something	I cannot make heads or tails of these instructions.
It dawned on me	I suddenly realized	It dawned on me that I had forgotten my wallet.
Take a step back	Consider from a wider view	We need to take a step back and review the plan.
Put things in perspective	View something reasonably	The trip helped put my problems in perspective.
Get your head around	Understand	It took me time to get my head around the new rules.
Know better	Have enough experience not to do something	You should know better than to leave the door open.
Have a hunch	Have a feeling without proof	I have a hunch that she will win.
Trust your gut	Follow your instinct	I trusted my gut and refused the offer.
Read the situation	Understand what is happening	Good leaders know how to read the situation.
Change your tune	Change your opinion	He changed his tune after seeing the results.
Come to your senses	Begin thinking reasonably	He finally came to his senses and apologized.

7. Speaking and Communication Idioms

40 idioms in this section. Meanings are kept short so the table stays easy to scan.

Idiom	Short Meaning	Example Sentence
Get straight to the point	Speak directly	Let us get straight to the point.
Beat around the bush	Avoid the main subject	Stop beating around the bush and answer me.
Hit the nail on the head	Say exactly what is correct	You hit the nail on the head.
Speak your mind	Say what you truly think	Do not be afraid to speak your mind.
Get a word in edgewise	Find a chance to speak	He talked so much I could not get a word in edgewise.
Hear it through the grapevine	Learn through informal talk	I heard through the grapevine that she is leaving.
Keep someone posted	Give regular updates	Keep me posted about the results.
Put in a good word	Say something positive about someone	Could you put in a good word for me?
Spread the word	Tell many people	Please spread the word about the event.
Word of mouth	Information shared between people	Most customers come through word of mouth.
Talk shop	Discuss work outside work	We promised not to talk shop at dinner.
Talk someone into	Persuade someone	She talked me into joining the class.
Talk someone out of	Persuade someone not to do something	I talked him out of quitting.
Speak volumes	Communicate a lot without words	Her expression spoke volumes.
Say a mouthful	Say something important or true	You said a mouthful there.
Put words in someone's mouth	Claim someone said something they did not	Do not put words in my mouth.
Mince your words	Speak indirectly or too carefully	She never minces her words.
Hold your tongue	Stop yourself from speaking	I wanted to complain but held my tongue.
Bite your tongue	Stop yourself saying something	I bit my tongue and stayed polite.
Let something slip	Reveal something accidentally	He let the surprise slip.
Get the message across	Communicate successfully	The picture helps get the message across.

Idiom	Short Meaning	Example Sentence
Get your wires crossed	Misunderstand each other	We got our wires crossed about the meeting time.
Lost in translation	Meaning changed during translation	Some humor gets lost in translation.
Read someone loud and clear	Understand clearly	I hear you loud and clear.
Loud and clear	Very clearly	Your instructions came through loud and clear.
Have a word with	Speak briefly with someone	I need to have a word with you.
A heart-to-heart	Honest personal conversation	We had a heart-to-heart last night.
Small talk	Light casual conversation	We made small talk while waiting.
Talk nineteen to the dozen	Talk very quickly	The children were talking nineteen to the dozen.
Give someone an earful	Speak angrily for a long time	Dad gave me an earful for being late.
Bend someone's ear	Talk to someone for a long time	He bent my ear about his new project.
Have the gift of the gab	Speak confidently and persuasively	Salespeople often need the gift of the gab.
Put it in a nutshell	Say something briefly	To put it in a nutshell, we need more time.
Cut to the chase	Get to the important point	Let us cut to the chase.
Talk is cheap	Words mean little without action	He makes promises, but talk is cheap.
Actions speak louder than words	Behavior matters more than promises	She helped quietly because actions speak louder than words.
Have a way with words	Express yourself well	He has a way with words.
Give someone your word	Make a promise	I give you my word that I will return it.
Take someone's word for it	Believe someone without proof	I will take your word for it.
Not get a word out of someone	Be unable to make someone talk	We could not get a word out of him.

8. Truth, Secrets, and Information Idioms

40 idioms in this section. Meanings are kept short so the table stays easy to scan.

Idiom	Short Meaning	Example Sentence
Spill the beans	Reveal a secret	Who spilled the beans about the party?
Let the cat out of the bag	Reveal a secret accidentally	Tom let the cat out of the bag.
Keep something under your hat	Keep something secret	Keep this news under your hat.
Behind closed doors	In private	The discussion happened behind closed doors.
Off the record	Not for public reporting	His comments were off the record.
In the dark	Without information	Employees were kept in the dark.
Shed light on	Help explain something	The report sheds light on the problem.
Come to light	Become known	New evidence came to light.
The truth will out	Truth eventually becomes known	You cannot hide it forever; the truth will out.
Come clean	Tell the truth	He finally came clean about the mistake.
Own up	Admit responsibility	She owned up to breaking the vase.
Level with someone	Speak honestly	Please level with me about the cost.
Straight from the horse's mouth	From the original source	I heard it straight from the horse's mouth.
Take at face value	Accept without questioning	Do not take every advertisement at face value.
A white lie	Small lie intended to avoid harm	She told a white lie about liking the gift.
Stretch the truth	Exaggerate	He tends to stretch the truth.
Economical with the truth	Avoid telling the complete truth	The spokesperson was economical with the truth.
Pull the wool over someone's eyes	Deceive someone	You cannot pull the wool over my eyes.
Lead someone up the garden path	Deceive or mislead someone	They led investors up the garden path.
Smoke and mirrors	Deceptive appearance	The impressive numbers were mostly smoke and mirrors.
Cover your tracks	Hide evidence	The thief tried to cover his tracks.
A hidden agenda	Secret purpose	I suspect he has a hidden agenda.

Idiom	Short Meaning	Example Sentence
Skeleton in the closet	Embarrassing secret	Every family seems to have a skeleton in the closet.
Open secret	Something supposedly secret but widely known	Their disagreement is an open secret.
Blow the whistle	Report wrongdoing	An employee blew the whistle on the fraud.
Blow someone's cover	Reveal someone's hidden identity	The photograph blew his cover.
Keep mum	Stay silent	Everyone agreed to keep mum.
Mum's the word	Keep it secret	Mum's the word about the gift.
Read someone like a book	Understand someone's thoughts easily	Her mother can read her like a book.
See through someone	Recognize someone's true intention	I can see through his excuses.
Get wind of	Hear about something secretly	Reporters got wind of the deal.
Word gets around	Information spreads	In a small town, word gets around quickly.
Put someone in the picture	Give someone needed information	Let me put you in the picture.
Know the score	Understand the true situation	Do not worry; I know the score.
Have the inside track	Have useful private information	She has the inside track on the negotiations.
Keep someone in the loop	Keep someone informed	Please keep me in the loop.
Leave someone in the dark	Not tell someone important information	They left us in the dark about the changes.
Get the lowdown	Learn the important facts	I called Sam to get the lowdown.
The word is out	Information has become public	The word is out about the new store.
Make no secret of	Speak openly about	She makes no secret of her ambition.

9. Happiness, Sadness, and Emotion Idioms

40 idioms in this section. Meanings are kept short so the table stays easy to scan.

Idiom	Short Meaning	Example Sentence
Over the moon	Extremely happy	She was over the moon about the result.
On cloud nine	Extremely happy	He has been on cloud nine since the wedding.
Walking on air	Feeling extremely happy	I was walking on air after hearing the news.
In seventh heaven	Extremely delighted	They were in seventh heaven on vacation.
Full of the joys of spring	Very cheerful	She arrived full of the joys of spring.
Have a spring in your step	Look cheerful and energetic	He had a spring in his step today.
Grin from ear to ear	Smile widely	She was grinning from ear to ear.
Jump for joy	Show great happiness	The children jumped for joy.
Music to your ears	News you are pleased to hear	A pay rise was music to my ears.
Make someone's day	Make someone very happy	Your message made my day.
Warm someone's heart	Make someone feel happy and touched	Their kindness warmed my heart.
Burst with pride	Feel extremely proud	Her parents were bursting with pride.
Have a soft spot for	Feel special affection for	I have a soft spot for old dogs.
Wear your heart on your sleeve	Show emotions openly	He wears his heart on his sleeve.
Have mixed feelings	Feel both positive and negative emotions	I have mixed feelings about leaving.
Down in the dumps	Sad	She has been down in the dumps lately.
Feel blue	Feel sad	I felt blue after my friend moved away.
Have a heavy heart	Feel deeply sad	He left the town with a heavy heart.
Cry your eyes out	Cry a lot	She cried her eyes out after the film.
Break someone's heart	Cause deep sadness	The news broke his heart.
Heart sinks	Suddenly feel worried or disappointed	My heart sank when I saw the damage.
Lump in your throat	Feeling that makes speaking difficult	I had a lump in my throat during the farewell.

Idiom	Short Meaning	Example Sentence
Get emotional	Become strongly affected emotionally	He got emotional during his speech.
Bottle up your feelings	Hide emotions	Do not bottle up your feelings.
Let it all out	Express hidden emotions	She cried and let it all out.
Have a good cry	Cry to release emotion	Sometimes having a good cry helps.
Shed tears	Cry	She shed tears of happiness.
Close to tears	Almost crying	He looked close to tears.
Take something to heart	Be deeply affected by something	Do not take his criticism to heart.
Heart goes out to someone	Feel sympathy	My heart goes out to the victims.
Be beside yourself	Be overwhelmed by emotion	She was beside herself with worry.
Have butterflies in your stomach	Feel nervous excitement	I had butterflies in my stomach before the interview.
Get carried away	Become overly excited	We got carried away while shopping.
Keep your spirits up	Stay cheerful	Try to keep your spirits up.
Lift someone's spirits	Make someone happier	The good news lifted her spirits.
Be in good spirits	Feel cheerful	Everyone was in good spirits.
Be in high spirits	Feel very cheerful	The children were in high spirits.
Be in low spirits	Feel sad	He was in low spirits after losing.
Pour your heart out	Share your deepest feelings	She poured her heart out to her sister.
Tug at the heartstrings	Cause strong emotion	The story tugged at my heartstrings.

10. Anger, Fear, and Stress Idioms

40 idioms in this section. Meanings are kept short so the table stays easy to scan.

Idiom	Short Meaning	Example Sentence
See red	Become very angry	He saw red when he found the damage.
Blow your top	Become extremely angry	Dad blew his top when he saw the bill.
Hit the roof	Become very angry	My boss hit the roof over the mistake.
Fly off the handle	Suddenly become angry	She flew off the handle over a small issue.
Lose your temper	Become angry	Try not to lose your temper.
Get on someone's nerves	Annoy someone	That constant tapping gets on my nerves.
Drive someone up the wall	Annoy greatly	The noise is driving me up the wall.
Rub someone the wrong way	Irritate someone	His attitude rubs me the wrong way.
Get under someone's skin	Irritate someone deeply	His comments really get under my skin.
Make your blood boil	Make you extremely angry	Cruelty to animals makes my blood boil.
A short fuse	Tendency to become angry quickly	Our manager has a short fuse.
Keep your cool	Stay calm	Keep your cool during the interview.
Lose your cool	Stop being calm	He lost his cool during the argument.
Cool down	Become calmer	Go outside and cool down.
Let off steam	Release anger or stress	I exercise to let off steam.
Blow off steam	Release strong feelings	We went for a walk to blow off steam.
Scared stiff	Extremely frightened	I was scared stiff during the storm.
Scared to death	Extremely afraid	The sudden noise scared me to death.
Shake like a leaf	Tremble with fear	He was shaking like a leaf.
Get cold feet	Become nervous before doing something	She got cold feet before the ceremony.
Jump out of your skin	Be badly startled	I nearly jumped out of my skin.
Make your hair stand on end	Frighten you greatly	That story made my hair stand on end.
Send shivers down your spine	Cause fear or strong emotion	The sound sent shivers down my spine.

Idiom	Short Meaning	Example Sentence
Give someone the creeps	Make someone uncomfortable or afraid	That empty house gives me the creeps.
Have your heart in your mouth	Feel very nervous	My heart was in my mouth during the landing.
Break out in a cold sweat	Suddenly become very nervous	I broke out in a cold sweat before speaking.
A bundle of nerves	Very nervous person	I was a bundle of nerves before the exam.
On edge	Nervous and unable to relax	Everyone was on edge.
At breaking point	Unable to handle more pressure	He was close to breaking point.
Under pressure	Experiencing stress	The team is under pressure to finish.
Under the gun	Under strong pressure	We are under the gun to meet the deadline.
Tear your hair out	Feel extremely frustrated	I was tearing my hair out over the error.
At the end of your rope	Unable to deal with more difficulty	I am at the end of my rope.
Have a lot on your plate	Have many responsibilities	I have a lot on my plate this week.
Snowed under	Overloaded with work	I am snowed under with emails.
Keep a stiff upper lip	Stay calm despite difficulty	He kept a stiff upper lip throughout the crisis.
Take a deep breath	Calm yourself	Take a deep breath before answering.
Sweat bullets	Be extremely nervous	I was sweating bullets before my turn.
Frighten the life out of someone	Frighten someone greatly	That scream frightened the life out of me.
Have nerves of steel	Remain calm in danger	Pilots need nerves of steel.

11. Personality and Behavior Idioms

40 idioms in this section. Meanings are kept short so the table stays easy to scan.

Idiom	Short Meaning	Example Sentence
A people person	Someone who enjoys being with others	Maria is a real people person.
A creature of habit	Someone who likes routine	My grandfather is a creature of habit.
A dark horse	Person with unexpected abilities	She was the dark horse of the competition.
A loose cannon	Unpredictable person	He can be a loose cannon in meetings.
A smart cookie	Clever person	Your daughter is a smart cookie.
A tough cookie	Strong, determined person	Our new coach is a tough cookie.
An old soul	Young person with mature qualities	Ella is only twelve but an old soul.
Big mouth	Person who reveals secrets	Do not tell him; he has a big mouth.
Couch potato	Person who spends much time sitting	I became a couch potato during vacation.
Cold fish	Emotionally distant person	He seems like a cold fish at first.
Copycat	Person who copies others	Stop being a copycat and create your own design.
Early bird	Person who wakes or arrives early	I am an early bird.
Night owl	Person active late at night	My brother is a night owl.
Lone wolf	Person who prefers working alone	He is a lone wolf by nature.
Social butterfly	Person who enjoys many social events	Sara is a social butterfly.
Jack of all trades	Person with many skills	My uncle is a jack of all trades.
Know-it-all	Person who acts as if they know everything	Nobody likes a know-it-all.
Go-getter	Energetic ambitious person	She is a go-getter who never waits around.
Happy-go-lucky	Cheerful and carefree	He has a happy-go-lucky personality.
Down to earth	Practical and friendly	Despite her success, she is down to earth.
Larger than life	Very impressive personality	His larger-than-life personality filled the room.

Idiom	Short Meaning	Example Sentence
Set in your ways	Unwilling to change habits	My grandfather is set in his ways.
Have a heart of gold	Be very kind	Our neighbor has a heart of gold.
Have a thick skin	Not be easily offended	Politicians need a thick skin.
Have a thin skin	Be easily offended	He has a thin skin about criticism.
Full of yourself	Too proud of yourself	Do not get too full of yourself.
Head in the clouds	Not practical or attentive	He always has his head in the clouds.
Feet on the ground	Practical and realistic	She keeps her feet on the ground.
Stick in the mud	Person who dislikes fun or change	Do not be such a stick in the mud.
Wet blanket	Person who spoils others' enjoyment	Do not invite him if he is going to be a wet blanket.
Good egg	Kind, reliable person	Sam is a good egg.
Bad apple	Person who negatively affects a group	One bad apple can damage the whole team.
Rotten apple	Dishonest or troublesome person	The company removed a few rotten apples.
Big cheese	Important person	He thinks he is the big cheese around here.
Top dog	Most powerful person	She became top dog in the department.
Salt of the earth	Very honest and good person	Those farmers are the salt of the earth.
Man of his word	Man who keeps promises	My father is a man of his word.
Woman of her word	Woman who keeps promises	She is a woman of her word.
One of a kind	Unique person or thing	My grandmother was one of a kind.
Have your head screwed on	Be sensible	She has her head screwed on and makes careful decisions.

12. Friendship and Relationship Idioms

40 idioms in this section. Meanings are kept short so the table stays easy to scan.

Idiom	Short Meaning	Example Sentence
Get along like a house on fire	Become friends quickly	We got along like a house on fire.
Hit it off	Like each other immediately	Ben and I hit it off at once.
See eye to eye	Agree	We do not always see eye to eye.
Through thick and thin	During good and bad times	She stayed with me through thick and thin.
Be there for someone	Support someone	I will always be there for you.
Get on well	Have a good relationship	I get on well with my neighbors.
Go back a long way	Have known each other for years	Maya and I go back a long way.
Have someone's back	Support and protect someone	Do not worry; I have your back.
Lend a shoulder to cry on	Give emotional support	She always gives me a shoulder to cry on.
Birds of a feather	Similar people	Those two are birds of a feather.
Two peas in a pod	Two very similar people	The sisters are like two peas in a pod.
Joined at the hip	Always together	Those friends are joined at the hip.
Be on good terms	Have a friendly relationship	I am on good terms with my former boss.
Be on speaking terms	Be willing to speak	They are finally on speaking terms again.
Get off on the wrong foot	Begin a relationship badly	We got off on the wrong foot.
Mend fences	Repair a relationship	He called his brother to mend fences.
Build bridges	Improve relationships	The meeting helped build bridges.
Bury the hatchet	End a disagreement	They decided to bury the hatchet.
Clear the air	Discuss and remove bad feelings	We met to clear the air.
Make up	Become friendly again	The sisters argued but soon made up.
Fall head over heels	Fall deeply in love	He fell head over heels for her.
Have eyes for someone	Be romantically interested in someone	She only has eyes for her husband.
Tie the knot	Get married	They plan to tie the knot next spring.

Idiom	Short Meaning	Example Sentence
Pop the question	Ask someone to marry you	He popped the question during dinner.
Match made in heaven	Very well-suited couple	Everyone says they are a match made in heaven.
Love at first sight	Immediate romantic attraction	For them, it was love at first sight.
Apple of someone's eye	Someone deeply loved	His daughter is the apple of his eye.
Better half	Husband, wife, or partner	I am bringing my better half to dinner.
Wear the trousers	Be the dominant partner	Everyone jokes that she wears the trousers at home.
Have a crush on	Feel romantic attraction	He has a crush on his classmate.
Carry a torch for	Continue loving someone	He still carries a torch for his old friend.
Break up	End a romantic relationship	They broke up last month.
Drift apart	Gradually become less close	We drifted apart after school.
Kiss and make up	End an argument and become friendly	It is time to kiss and make up.
Patch things up	Repair a relationship	They managed to patch things up.
Blood is thicker than water	Family relationships can be very strong	He helped his brother because blood is thicker than water.
Like father, like son	Son resembles his father	Both love fishing - like father, like son.
Like mother, like daughter	Daughter resembles her mother	Both are excellent cooks - like mother, like daughter.
Run in the family	Be common within a family	Musical ability runs in their family.
Nearest and dearest	Closest family and friends	She celebrated with her nearest and dearest.

13. Conflict and Social Situation Idioms

40 idioms in this section. Meanings are kept short so the table stays easy to scan.

Idiom	Short Meaning	Example Sentence
Lock horns	Argue strongly	The two managers locked horns over the budget.
At each other's throats	Arguing angrily	The neighbors are always at each other's throats.
Have a bone to pick	Have something to complain about	I have a bone to pick with you.
Pick a fight	Deliberately start an argument	He was trying to pick a fight.
Rub salt in the wound	Make someone feel worse	Talking about the loss only rubbed salt in the wound.
Add insult to injury	Make a bad situation worse	The delay added insult to injury.
Give someone the cold shoulder	Deliberately ignore someone	She gave me the cold shoulder.
Turn your back on	Refuse to support	His friends turned their backs on him.
Burn your bridges	Destroy relationships or options	Do not burn your bridges when leaving a job.
Cross the line	Behave unacceptably	That comment crossed the line.
Step on someone's toes	Offend or interfere with someone	I do not want to step on anyone's toes.
Rock the boat	Cause trouble in a stable situation	Nobody wanted to rock the boat.
Stir the pot	Create conflict	He enjoys stirring the pot during meetings.
Ruffle feathers	Annoy people	The new policy ruffled a few feathers.
Get someone's back up	Make someone defensive	His rude tone got my back up.
Give someone a hard time	Criticize or trouble someone	Stop giving your brother a hard time.
Have it in for someone	Strongly dislike and target someone	I think the supervisor has it in for me.
Bad blood	Long-lasting anger	There is bad blood between the families.
No love lost	Strong dislike between people	There is no love lost between those two.
A war of words	Public verbal argument	The debate turned into a war of words.
Fight tooth and nail	Fight very hard	Residents fought tooth and nail against the closure.

Idiom	Short Meaning	Example Sentence
Draw the line	Set a limit	I draw the line at personal insults.
Hold a grudge	Stay angry for a long time	She never holds a grudge.
Let bygones be bygones	Forget past disagreements	Let us let bygones be bygones.
Agree to disagree	Accept that opinions differ	We agreed to disagree.
Meet someone halfway	Compromise	I am willing to meet you halfway.
Find common ground	Find shared opinions	The groups finally found common ground.
Smooth things over	Reduce conflict	She tried to smooth things over.
Pour oil on troubled waters	Calm a disagreement	His apology poured oil on troubled waters.
Keep the peace	Prevent conflict	I stayed quiet to keep the peace.
Make peace	End a conflict	The two friends finally made peace.
Extend an olive branch	Offer peace	She extended an olive branch by calling first.
Call a truce	Agree to stop arguing	We called a truce for the weekend.
Take sides	Support one party in a disagreement	I refuse to take sides.
Sit on the fence	Avoid choosing a side	You cannot sit on the fence forever.
Give and take	Mutual compromise	Every relationship needs some give and take.
Play devil's advocate	Argue the opposite view for discussion	I will play devil's advocate for a moment.
Stir up trouble	Cause problems	He was accused of stirring up trouble.
Keep someone at arm's length	Avoid becoming too close	She keeps most colleagues at arm's length.
Put someone in their place	Show someone they are behaving arrogantly	Her reply quickly put him in his place.

14. Help, Support, and Cooperation Idioms

40 idioms in this section. Meanings are kept short so the table stays easy to scan.

Idiom	Short Meaning	Example Sentence
Lend a hand	Help	Could you lend me a hand?
Pitch in	Help with a shared task	Everyone pitched in to clean the room.
Chip in	Contribute money or effort	We all chipped in for the gift.
Do your bit	Make your contribution	Everyone should do their bit.
Do your part	Fulfill your responsibility	I will do my part to help.
Shoulder the burden	Accept responsibility	She shouldered the burden for the whole team.
Carry the load	Do much of the work	Two workers were carrying most of the load.
Take something off someone's plate	Remove a responsibility	I can take that report off your plate.
Go to bat for someone	Defend or support someone	My manager went to bat for me.
Stand by someone	Continue supporting someone	Her family stood by her.
Stand up for someone	Defend someone	He stood up for his younger brother.
Stick up for someone	Defend someone	Thanks for sticking up for me.
Back someone up	Support someone's statement	Can you back me up in the meeting?
Rally around	Gather to support someone	The community rallied around the family.
Give someone a leg up	Help someone gain an advantage	The internship gave her a leg up.
Show someone the ropes	Teach someone how things work	I will show you the ropes on Monday.
Take someone under your wing	Guide and protect someone	The senior teacher took me under her wing.
Hold someone's hand	Give close support	New staff should not need us to hold their hands forever.
Come to someone's rescue	Help someone in trouble	My neighbor came to my rescue.
Come through for someone	Provide needed help	You really came through for me.
Have someone in your corner	Have a supporter	It helps to have an experienced lawyer in your corner.

Idiom	Short Meaning	Example Sentence
Return the favor	Help someone who helped you	You helped me yesterday, so let me return the favor.
Scratch my back and I'll scratch yours	Exchange favors	Their agreement was basically scratch my back and I'll scratch yours.
Many hands make light work	More helpers make work easier	Everyone joined in because many hands make light work.
Pull together	Work cooperatively	The whole community pulled together.
Join forces	Work together	The two companies joined forces.
Put our heads together	Think together	Let us put our heads together and solve this.
Work hand in hand	Cooperate closely	Teachers and parents should work hand in hand.
Hand in glove	Working very closely together	The teams worked hand in glove.
In the same boat	In the same situation	We are all in the same boat.
One for all and all for one	Everyone supports everyone	Our team believes in one for all and all for one.
Share the load	Divide work	We should share the load equally.
Take one for the team	Accept difficulty for others	He took one for the team and worked Saturday.
Hold the fort	Take responsibility while someone is away	Can you hold the fort while I get lunch?
Cover for someone	Do someone's duties temporarily	I covered for Ana while she was ill.
Have someone's best interests at heart	Want what is best for someone	Your parents have your best interests at heart.
Bend over backwards	Make great effort to help	Staff bent over backwards to help us.
Go out of your way	Make special effort	She went out of her way to help.
A friend in need is a friend indeed	True friends help in difficulty	Sam stayed all night; a friend in need is a friend indeed.
Give someone a boost	Help or encourage someone	Her kind words gave me a boost.

15. Money and Finance Idioms

40 idioms in this section. Meanings are kept short so the table stays easy to scan.

Idiom	Short Meaning	Example Sentence
Cost an arm and a leg	Be very expensive	That watch costs an arm and a leg.
Break the bank	Cost more than you can afford	Dinner here will not break the bank.
Make ends meet	Have enough money for necessities	Many families struggle to make ends meet.
Tighten your belt	Spend less money	We need to tighten our belts this month.
Save for a rainy day	Save money for future problems	I put part of my salary aside for a rainy day.
Nest egg	Money saved for the future	They built a healthy nest egg for retirement.
Born with a silver spoon in your mouth	Born into a wealthy family	He was born with a silver spoon in his mouth.
Money to burn	More money than needed	They act as if they have money to burn.
Rolling in money	Very rich	People assume celebrities are rolling in money.
Dirt cheap	Extremely inexpensive	I bought these books dirt cheap.
Cheap as chips	Very inexpensive	The tickets were cheap as chips.
Pay through the nose	Pay too much	We paid through the nose for parking.
Daylight robbery	Shockingly high price	Twenty dollars for water is daylight robbery.
Worth every penny	Fully worth the price	The course was worth every penny.
Get your money's worth	Receive good value	We certainly got our money's worth.
Money down the drain	Money wasted	The failed repair was money down the drain.
Throw money around	Spend carelessly	He likes throwing money around.
Throw good money after bad	Keep spending on a failed effort	Repairing it again means throwing good money after bad.
Splash out	Spend a lot on something enjoyable	We splashed out on a nice hotel.
Fork out	Pay unwillingly	I had to fork out for a new tire.
Cough up	Pay money reluctantly	He finally coughed up the fee.
Foot the bill	Pay the cost	The company will foot the bill.

Idiom	Short Meaning	Example Sentence
Pick up the tab	Pay for others	She picked up the tab at lunch.
On the house	Free from the business	Dessert was on the house.
Go Dutch	Each person pays their share	We went Dutch at dinner.
Live from hand to mouth	Have only enough money for immediate needs	They lived from hand to mouth for years.
Live within your means	Spend only what you can afford	Try to live within your means.
In the red	Owing money	The company is still in the red.
In the black	Financially profitable	The business is finally in the black.
Go broke	Lose all your money	He nearly went broke after the investment failed.
Flat broke	Have no money	I was flat broke at the end of college.
Feel the pinch	Experience financial pressure	Families are feeling the pinch.
Pinch pennies	Spend very carefully	We pinched pennies to afford the trip.
Penny-pincher	Person reluctant to spend	My uncle is a famous penny-pincher.
A pretty penny	A large amount of money	That antique cost a pretty penny.
Pay top dollar	Pay a high price	Collectors pay top dollar for rare items.
Cash cow	Reliable source of profit	The subscription service became a cash cow.
Golden goose	Valuable source of continued profit	Do not destroy the golden goose.
Money talks	Money gives influence	In some industries, money talks.
Put your money where your mouth is	Support your words with action or money	If you believe in the idea, put your money where your mouth is.

16. Business, Jobs, and Career Idioms

40 idioms in this section. Meanings are kept short so the table stays easy to scan.

Idiom	Short Meaning	Example Sentence
Climb the corporate ladder	Advance professionally	She hopes to climb the corporate ladder.
Get your foot in the door	Gain an initial opportunity	The internship helped him get his foot in the door.
Land a job	Successfully get a job	She landed a job at a bank.
Dead-end job	Job with little chance of progress	He left his dead-end job.
Dream job	Ideal job	Teaching abroad is her dream job.
Day job	Regular main employment	He writes music after finishing his day job.
Work your way up	Advance through effort	She worked her way up from assistant to director.
Move up the ladder	Gain higher positions	He moved up the ladder quickly.
Glass ceiling	Invisible barrier to advancement	Many workers still face a glass ceiling.
Golden handshake	Large payment when leaving a senior job	The executive received a golden handshake.
Golden parachute	Financial protection for a departing executive	His contract included a golden parachute.
Get the sack	Be dismissed from a job	He got the sack for repeated absences.
Get the boot	Be fired	Several employees got the boot.
Be shown the door	Be asked to leave	The rude customer was shown the door.
Hand in your notice	Officially resign	She handed in her notice yesterday.
Call the shots	Make important decisions	The regional director calls the shots.
Learn on the job	Gain skills while working	Most technicians learn on the job.
Think on your feet	Respond quickly	Customer service staff must think on their feet.
Corner the market	Control most sales in a market	The company hopes to corner the market.
Drive a hard bargain	Negotiate firmly	Their supplier drives a hard bargain.
Get down to brass tacks	Discuss practical details	Let us get down to brass tacks.
Talk business	Discuss work matters	We met for coffee and talked business.
Business as usual	Normal activity continues	Despite the rain, it was business as usual.

Idiom	Short Meaning	Example Sentence
Mean business	Be serious	The new manager clearly means business.
Booming business	Rapidly growing business	Online delivery has become a booming business.
Go out of business	Stop operating	Several shops went out of business.
Do a roaring trade	Sell very well	The cafe does a roaring trade at lunchtime.
Seal the deal	Finalize an agreement	A final meeting helped seal the deal.
Sweeten the deal	Make an offer more attractive	They added free delivery to sweeten the deal.
Close the deal	Complete a business agreement	She closed the deal on Friday.
Strike a deal	Reach an agreement	The companies struck a deal.
Hard sell	Aggressive selling technique	Customers dislike the hard sell.
Sell like hotcakes	Sell very quickly	The new phones sold like hotcakes.
Get a bargain	Buy something for a good price	We got a bargain on the furniture.
Shop around	Compare prices	Shop around before buying insurance.
Bottom line	Most important result, often profit	The bottom line is that costs are rising.
Big picture	Overall situation	Managers need to focus on the big picture.
Learning experience	Experience that teaches something	The failed launch was a learning experience.
Raise the bar	Set a higher standard	Their new product raised the bar.
Touch base	Make brief contact	I will touch base with you tomorrow.

17. Leadership and Teamwork Idioms

40 idioms in this section. Meanings are kept short so the table stays easy to scan.

Idiom	Short Meaning	Example Sentence
Lead by example	Show others through your actions	Good managers lead by example.
Take the lead	Become responsible for directing something	Nina took the lead on the project.
Take charge	Assume control	Someone needs to take charge.
At the helm	In control of an organization	She has been at the helm for six years.
At the wheel	In control	We need an experienced person at the wheel.
Run a tight ship	Manage very efficiently	Our supervisor runs a tight ship.
Rule with an iron fist	Control very strictly	The old manager ruled with an iron fist.
Keep everyone on their toes	Make people stay alert	Surprise checks keep everyone on their toes.
Set the pace	Establish the speed or standard	Our fastest runner set the pace.
Lead the way	Be first or show others what to do	Small firms are leading the way in innovation.
Pass the baton	Transfer responsibility	The director passed the baton to her successor.
Take the reins	Take control	He will take the reins next month.
Hand over the reins	Give control to someone else	She handed over the reins after ten years.
Too many cooks spoil the broth	Too many people managing can cause problems	Let one person lead; too many cooks spoil the broth.
All hands on deck	Everyone is needed to help	It is all hands on deck before the launch.
A chain is only as strong as its weakest link	A group depends on every member	We must train everyone because a chain is only as strong as its weakest link.
Team player	Person who cooperates well	Employers value a strong team player.
Play your part	Do your share	Everyone played their part in the success.
Pull in the same direction	Work toward the same goal	We need everyone pulling in the same direction.
Sing from the same hymn sheet	Express the same position	Leaders must sing from the same hymn sheet.
Get your ducks in a row	Organize things properly	Get your ducks in a row before the meeting.

Idiom	Short Meaning	Example Sentence
Keep your eye on the ball	Stay focused	Keep your eye on the ball during negotiations.
Take one step at a time	Progress gradually	We will improve one step at a time.
Steer the ship	Guide an organization	She successfully steered the ship through difficult months.
Wear many hats	Have several roles	Small-business owners wear many hats.
Pass the buck	Shift responsibility	Stop passing the buck and solve the problem.
The buck stops here	Ultimate responsibility is mine	As director, the buck stops here.
Take responsibility	Accept duty for something	Good leaders take responsibility for mistakes.
Carry the can	Accept blame	He was left to carry the can for the failure.
Fall on your sword	Accept blame and resign	The minister fell on his sword after the scandal.
Keep the team afloat	Help a team survive difficulty	Extra funding kept the team afloat.
Bring something to the table	Offer useful skills or ideas	She brings years of experience to the table.
Put heads together	Cooperate to solve something	We put our heads together and found a solution.
Be on board	Agree with a plan	Is everyone on board with the proposal?
Get everyone on board	Gain support	We must get the whole team on board.
On the front line	Directly involved in difficult work	Nurses are on the front line of patient care.
Take center stage	Become most important	Customer service took center stage.
Behind the scenes	Away from public attention	Many people worked behind the scenes.
Keep the wheels turning	Maintain operations	Support staff keep the wheels turning.
Run like a well-oiled machine	Operate very smoothly	The event ran like a well-oiled machine.

18. Body and Health Idioms

40 idioms in this section. Meanings are kept short so the table stays easy to scan.

Idiom	Short Meaning	Example Sentence
Under the weather	Feeling unwell	I am feeling under the weather today.
Fit as a fiddle	Very healthy	My grandfather is eighty and fit as a fiddle.
Alive and kicking	Healthy and active	The old tradition is still alive and kicking.
Back on your feet	Healthy or independent again	She was back on her feet within a week.
On the mend	Recovering	He is on the mend after surgery.
Run down	Tired and unhealthy	I have been feeling run down lately.
Out of shape	Not physically fit	I am out of shape after months without exercise.
In shape	Physically fit	She exercises to stay in shape.
Catch your breath	Rest until breathing normally	Stop here and catch your breath.
Get your breath back	Recover normal breathing	I needed a minute to get my breath back.
A clean bill of health	Confirmation of good health	The doctor gave him a clean bill of health.
Sick as a dog	Very ill	I was sick as a dog yesterday.
Black and blue	Covered with bruises	His leg was black and blue after the fall.
Skin and bones	Extremely thin	The rescued dog was almost skin and bones.
Bag of bones	Very thin person or animal	The stray cat was a bag of bones.
Have one foot in the grave	Be very old or ill	He jokes that he has one foot in the grave.
In the pink	In very good health	She looks in the pink after her holiday.
Fresh as a daisy	Energetic and refreshed	After eight hours of sleep, I felt fresh as a daisy.
Recharge your batteries	Rest to regain energy	I need a weekend away to recharge my batteries.
Get a new lease of life	Become energetic or useful again	The treatment gave him a new lease of life.
Give your right arm for	Want something very much	I would give my right arm for a long vacation.
Cost a pretty penny	Be expensive	Dental treatment can cost a pretty penny.
Keep body and soul together	Survive with basic necessities	He took odd jobs to keep body and soul together.

Idiom	Short Meaning	Example Sentence
Have your hands tied	Be unable to act	I want to help, but my hands are tied.
Get your hands dirty	Do difficult practical work	Good managers sometimes need to get their hands dirty.
Wash your hands of	Refuse further responsibility	He washed his hands of the dispute.
Have blood on your hands	Be responsible for serious harm	The villain had blood on his hands.
Blood, sweat, and tears	Great effort and sacrifice	We built the business with blood, sweat, and tears.
Keep your chin up	Stay positive	Keep your chin up; you are doing well.
Stick your neck out	Take a personal risk	She stuck her neck out to defend me.
Pain in the neck	Annoying person or thing	Filling these forms is a pain in the neck.
Breathe down someone's neck	Watch someone too closely	I cannot work with someone breathing down my neck.
Get something off your chest	Say something that has worried you	I need to get something off my chest.
Put your back into it	Work with greater effort	Put your back into it and lift together.
Turn a blind eye	Deliberately ignore something	The manager turned a blind eye to the minor mistake.
Keep your eyes peeled	Watch carefully	Keep your eyes peeled for the sign.
Have eyes in the back of your head	Notice everything happening around you	Teachers sometimes need eyes in the back of their heads.
Keep your ears open	Listen for information	Keep your ears open for any news.
Be all ears	Listen with full attention	Tell me what happened; I am all ears.
Play it by ear	Decide as events develop	We have no fixed plan, so we will play it by ear.

19. Food and Drink Idioms

39 idioms in this section. Meanings are kept short so the table stays easy to scan.

Idiom	Short Meaning	Example Sentence
Easy as pie	Very easy	Setting up the app was easy as pie.
Have your cake and eat it too	Want two incompatible benefits	You cannot have your cake and eat it too.
Icing on the cake	Extra benefit	The bonus was the icing on the cake.
Take the cake	Be the most surprising or extreme	His latest excuse really takes the cake.
Sell like hot cakes	Sell very quickly	The tickets sold like hot cakes.
Half-baked idea	Poorly planned idea	That sounds like a half-baked idea.
Pie in the sky	Unrealistic hope	His promise of instant success is pie in the sky.
Finger in every pie	Involved in many activities	She seems to have a finger in every pie.
A slice of the pie	Share of money or opportunity	Everyone wants a slice of the pie.
As American as apple pie	Very typically American	Baseball is often described as American as apple pie.
Compare apples and oranges	Compare very different things	Comparing these two jobs is like comparing apples and oranges.
The apple doesn't fall far from the tree	Children often resemble parents	He loves music like his father; the apple doesn't fall far from the tree.
Bad apple spoils the barrel	One bad person can affect a group	Deal with the bully before one bad apple spoils the barrel.
Go bananas	Become very excited or angry	The crowd went bananas when the singer appeared.
Top banana	Most important person	She is the top banana in the office.
Second banana	Person in a supporting role	He is tired of playing second banana.
Cool as a cucumber	Very calm	She remained cool as a cucumber.
In a nutshell	In a few words	In a nutshell, the project needs more money.
Hard nut to crack	Difficult person or problem	The case is a hard nut to crack.
Nuts about	Very enthusiastic about	My son is nuts about football.
Butter someone up	Praise to gain favor	He buttered up the boss before asking for leave.
Bread and butter	Main source of income	Repairs are the shop's bread and butter.

Idiom	Short Meaning	Example Sentence
Know which side your bread is buttered on	Know what benefits you	He knows which side his bread is buttered on.
Best thing since sliced bread	Very useful new invention	She thinks the device is the best thing since sliced bread.
Bring home the bacon	Earn money for a household	Both parents work to bring home the bacon.
Chew the fat	Chat casually	We sat outside chewing the fat.
Fat chance	Very little chance	Will he apologize? Fat chance.
Gravy train	Easy source of money	Some consultants were accused of riding the gravy train.
Have bigger fish to fry	Have more important matters	I cannot argue about this; I have bigger fish to fry.
Fish out of water	Person uncomfortable in a situation	I felt like a fish out of water at the gala.
Drink like a fish	Drink alcohol excessively	The character in the novel drinks like a fish.
Full of beans	Energetic	The children are full of beans today.
Not worth a hill of beans	Worth very little	His promises are not worth a hill of beans.
Bean counter	Person focused heavily on finances	The bean counters rejected the proposal.
Egg someone on	Encourage risky behavior	His friends egged him on.
Walk on eggshells	Act carefully to avoid upsetting someone	We were walking on eggshells around him.
Cry over spilled milk	Be upset about something that cannot be changed	There is no use crying over spilled milk.
Milk it	Exploit a situation for advantage	He won one prize and milked it for months.
Spice things up	Make something more interesting	We added games to spice things up.

20. Home and Travel Idioms

40 idioms in this section. Meanings are kept short so the table stays easy to scan.

Idiom	Short Meaning	Example Sentence
Home sweet home	Happiness at being home	After two weeks away, it was home sweet home.
There's no place like home	Home feels best	The hotel was lovely, but there is no place like home.
Home away from home	Place where you feel comfortable	The small cafe became my home away from home.
Bring the house down	Receive very strong applause	Her final song brought the house down.
Get on like a house on fire	Become friendly very quickly	The new roommates got on like a house on fire.
House of cards	Weak system likely to collapse	Their financial plan was a house of cards.
Safe as houses	Very safe or certain	The investment was once considered safe as houses.
Set up house	Begin living independently	They set up house near the university.
Hit the road	Begin a journey	We should hit the road before sunrise.
On the road	Traveling	He spends most of the year on the road.
Take to the road	Start traveling	We took to the road early.
Road to nowhere	Course leading to no useful result	Their argument is a road to nowhere.
One for the road	Final drink before leaving	He ordered one for the road.
At a crossroads	Facing an important choice	Her career is at a crossroads.
Cross paths	Meet unexpectedly	Our paths crossed again in London.
Go your separate ways	Stop traveling or living together	After university, we went our separate ways.
Off the beaten track	Away from popular places	We stayed in a village off the beaten track.
Be on the right road	Be progressing correctly	Your recovery seems to be on the right road.
All roads lead to Rome	Different methods can reach the same goal	Choose either method; all roads lead to Rome.
Take the scenic route	Use a longer but attractive route	We took the scenic route through the hills.
Travel light	Carry little luggage	I prefer to travel light.

Idiom	Short Meaning	Example Sentence
Live out of a suitcase	Travel so much you rarely unpack	Consultants often live out of a suitcase.
Have itchy feet	Strongly want to travel	After six months at home, I have itchy feet.
Catch the travel bug	Develop a love of traveling	I caught the travel bug in college.
Miss the bus	Lose an opportunity	Apply soon or you will miss the bus.
That ship has sailed	Opportunity has passed	I wanted the job, but that ship has sailed.
Jump ship	Leave an organization or plan	Several employees jumped ship.
Learn the lay of the land	Understand a new place or situation	Give me a week to learn the lay of the land.
Find your feet	Become comfortable in a new situation	It took me a month to find my feet.
Know your way around	Know a place or system well	She knows her way around Paris.
Lose your bearings	Become confused about direction	I lost my bearings in the old city.
Point someone in the right direction	Give useful guidance	The receptionist pointed us in the right direction.
Go around in circles	Make no progress	We have been going around in circles.
Take a wrong turn	Make a wrong choice or direction	We took a wrong turn outside the city.
Back on track	Progress correctly again	The project is finally back on track.
Change course	Adopt a different direction	The company decided to change course.
At journey's end	At the end of a long process	After years of study, she was finally at journey's end.
Hit the trail	Start a journey, especially on foot	We hit the trail just after sunrise.
Go the long way around	Use an indirect route	We went the long way around to avoid traffic.
Travel on a shoestring	Travel with very little money	They traveled around Europe on a shoestring.

21. Weather and Nature Idioms

39 idioms in this section. Meanings are kept short so the table stays easy to scan.

Idiom	Short Meaning	Example Sentence
Every cloud has a silver lining	Something good can come from difficulty	Losing that job led to a better one; every cloud has a silver lining.
Steal someone's thunder	Take attention or credit from someone	I did not mean to steal your thunder.
Calm before the storm	Quiet period before trouble	The office was strangely quiet - the calm before the storm.
A storm is brewing	Trouble is developing	A political storm is brewing.
Take a rain check	Postpone an invitation	Can I take a rain check on dinner?
Rain on someone's parade	Spoil someone's enjoyment	I hate to rain on your parade, but the event is cancelled.
Come rain or shine	Whatever happens	She walks every morning, come rain or shine.
It never rains but it pours	Problems often come together	First the car broke, then the roof leaked - it never rains but it pours.
Right as rain	Completely well again	After some rest, I felt right as rain.
Chase rainbows	Pursue unrealistic hopes	He keeps chasing rainbows instead of planning.
Under a cloud	Viewed with suspicion	The manager left the company under a cloud.
Cloud on the horizon	Sign of future trouble	Rising costs are a cloud on the horizon.
Snowball effect	Rapidly growing effect	One complaint created a snowball effect.
As pure as the driven snow	Completely innocent	He claims to be as pure as the driven snow.
Throw caution to the wind	Stop being cautious	We threw caution to the wind and booked the trip.
Sail close to the wind	Take risks near acceptable limits	The company is sailing close to the wind legally.
A breath of fresh air	Refreshingly new person or thing	The new teacher is a breath of fresh air.
Know which way the wind blows	Understand how a situation is developing	Experienced politicians know which way the wind blows.
Like a whirlwind	With fast, energetic activity	She entered the office like a whirlwind.
Make hay while the sun shines	Use a good opportunity while it lasts	Business is strong, so make hay while the sun shines.
Sunshine and roses	Pleasant and problem-free situation	Running a business is not always sunshine and roses.

Idiom	Short Meaning	Example Sentence
Ray of sunshine	Person who makes others happy	Her daughter is a ray of sunshine.
Place in the sun	Favorable or successful position	The company finally found its place in the sun.
Soak up the sun	Enjoy sitting in sunlight	We spent the afternoon soaking up the sun.
A drop in the ocean	Very small amount compared with what is needed	Our donation is only a drop in the ocean.
Plenty more fish in the sea	Other opportunities or partners exist	Do not worry; there are plenty more fish in the sea.
Make waves	Cause noticeable change or trouble	The young designer is making waves in fashion.
Go with the tide	Follow what others are doing	He usually goes with the tide.
Turn the tide	Reverse a situation	One goal turned the tide of the match.
Test the waters	Try something cautiously	We tested the waters with a small launch.
In deep waters	In serious trouble	The company found itself in deep waters.
Still waters run deep	Quiet people may have deep thoughts	Do not underestimate her; still waters run deep.
Go against the grain	Act contrary to what feels natural or usual	Asking for help goes against the grain for him.
Storm clouds gathering	Signs of coming trouble	Storm clouds are gathering over the project.
A perfect storm	Combination of problems happening together	A perfect storm of delays caused the shortage.
Weather-beaten	Worn by long exposure or hardship	The old sailor had a weather-beaten face.
Come hell or high water	Despite any difficulty	I will be there tomorrow, come hell or high water.
Under the sun	Of every possible kind	They discussed almost every topic under the sun.
A cloud over something	A problem that spoils a situation	The dispute cast a cloud over the celebration.

22. Animal Idioms

40 idioms in this section. Meanings are kept short so the table stays easy to scan.

Idiom	Short Meaning	Example Sentence
Let sleeping dogs lie	Avoid restarting an old problem	Do not mention the argument; let sleeping dogs lie.
Barking up the wrong tree	Following the wrong idea	If you think I broke it, you are barking up the wrong tree.
Every dog has its day	Everyone gets a chance for success	Keep trying; every dog has its day.
Dog-eat-dog world	Highly competitive situation	Advertising can be a dog-eat-dog world.
Dog days	Hottest period of summer	We stayed indoors during the dog days of August.
Go to the dogs	Become worse	The old building has gone to the dogs.
Underdog	Person expected to lose	Everyone supported the underdog.
Raining cats and dogs	Raining very heavily	It was raining cats and dogs.
Cat got your tongue?	Why are you silent?	You are unusually quiet - cat got your tongue?
Curiosity killed the cat	Being too curious can cause trouble	Stop opening private files; curiosity killed the cat.
Like a cat on a hot tin roof	Very nervous	He was like a cat on a hot tin roof before the interview.
Fight like cats and dogs	Argue constantly	The brothers fight like cats and dogs.
Fat cat	Wealthy powerful person	The article criticized corporate fat cats.
Scaredy-cat	Person easily frightened	I am a scaredy-cat around spiders.
Cat nap	Short sleep	I took a cat nap after lunch.
When the cat's away, the mice will play	People misbehave without supervision	The teacher left and the class got noisy - when the cat's away, the mice will play.
Hold your horses	Wait	Hold your horses; we are not ready yet.
Dark horse	Unexpectedly successful person	He became the dark horse of the election.
Horse around	Behave playfully	Stop horsing around in the classroom.
Eat like a horse	Eat a lot	Teenagers can eat like horses.
Get off your high horse	Stop acting superior	Get off your high horse and listen.
Wild horses couldn't drag me away	Nothing could make me leave	I love this concert; wild horses couldn't drag me away.

Idiom	Short Meaning	Example Sentence
Change horses in midstream	Change plans at a difficult time	We should not change horses in midstream.
Bull in a china shop	Clumsy person in a delicate situation	He is like a bull in a china shop.
Till the cows come home	For a very long time	We could argue till the cows come home.
Sacred cow	Idea considered beyond criticism	That policy has become a sacred cow.
Pig out	Eat too much	We pigged out on pizza.
When pigs fly	Never	He will clean his room when pigs fly.
Make a pig of yourself	Eat too much	Do not make a pig of yourself at dinner.
Guinea pig	Person used to test something	I volunteered to be the guinea pig.
Smell a rat	Suspect something dishonest	I smell a rat in this deal.
Rat race	Exhausting competitive lifestyle	He left the rat race for country life.
Like rats leaving a sinking ship	People abandoning a failing situation	Executives left like rats leaving a sinking ship.
Monkey business	Silly or dishonest behavior	Stop the monkey business and get to work.
Elephant in the room	Obvious issue nobody discusses	Cost is the elephant in the room.
Lion's share	Largest portion	She did the lion's share of the work.
Eager beaver	Very enthusiastic worker	Our new intern is an eager beaver.
Busy as a bee	Very busy	I have been busy as a bee all morning.
Watch like a hawk	Watch extremely closely	The guard watched us like a hawk.
Cry wolf	Give false warnings repeatedly	People stopped believing him because he cried wolf.

23. Color Idioms

39 idioms in this section. Meanings are kept short so the table stays easy to scan.

Idiom	Short Meaning	Example Sentence
Blue blood	Person from an aristocratic family	The character comes from blue blood.
Blue-collar worker	Manual worker	The town has many blue-collar workers.
Blue-eyed boy	Favored male person	He became the manager's blue-eyed boy.
Into the blue	Into the unknown	She left the city and disappeared into the blue.
Scream blue murder	Protest loudly	The child screamed blue murder at the dentist.
Red flag	Warning sign	His refusal to answer was a red flag.
Red tape	Excessive official rules	The project was delayed by red tape.
Roll out the red carpet	Give special treatment	The hotel rolled out the red carpet.
Paint the town red	Go out and celebrate	We painted the town red after graduation.
Red-letter day	Very memorable day	Graduation was a red-letter day for our family.
Catch someone red-handed	Catch someone doing something wrong	The thief was caught red-handed.
Like a red rag to a bull	Something that causes anger	Mentioning his defeat is like a red rag to a bull.
Green with envy	Very jealous	He was green with envy when she won.
Give the green light	Give permission	The council gave the green light to construction.
Get the green light	Receive permission	We finally got the green light.
Green thumb	Skill at growing plants	My grandmother has a green thumb.
Green around the gills	Looking sick	You look green around the gills.
Grass is always greener on the other side	Other situations often seem better	Remember, the grass is always greener on the other side.
Black sheep	Different or disapproved family member	He calls himself the black sheep of the family.
Black and white	Clear and definite	The issue is not always black and white.
In black and white	Written clearly	The agreement is there in black and white.
Black mark	Negative record	The complaint put a black mark against his name.
Black market	Illegal trade	The goods were sold on the black market.

Idiom	Short Meaning	Example Sentence
Black mood	Very bad mood	He has been in a black mood all morning.
Raise the white flag	Admit defeat	After hours of arguing, he raised the white flag.
White elephant	Expensive but useless possession	The empty stadium became a white elephant.
White-collar worker	Office or professional worker	The district attracts many white-collar workers.
Grey area	Situation without clear rules	Online privacy remains a grey area.
Grey matter	Intelligence or brain power	Use your grey matter and solve it.
Golden opportunity	Excellent opportunity	This scholarship is a golden opportunity.
Golden rule	Important general rule	My golden rule is to treat people fairly.
Golden age	Particularly successful period	Many call that decade the golden age of cinema.
Silver lining	Positive part of a difficult situation	The extra family time was a silver lining.
Tickled pink	Very pleased	Grandma was tickled pink by the surprise.
Purple patch	Period of great success	The striker is enjoying a purple patch.
Born to the purple	Born into royalty or high rank	The prince was born to the purple.
Golden boy	Highly successful or favored young man	He became the golden boy of the team.
Black tie	Very formal evening dress	The invitation says the event is black tie.
Show your true colors	Reveal your real character	He showed his true colors when things went wrong.

24. Sports and Game Idioms

39 idioms in this section. Meanings are kept short so the table stays easy to scan.

Idiom	Short Meaning	Example Sentence
Ball is in your court	It is your turn to decide	I have made my offer; the ball is in your court.
On the ball	Alert and capable	Our new assistant is really on the ball.
Whole new ball game	Completely different situation	Working overseas is a whole new ball game.
Level playing field	Fair situation	The rules should create a level playing field.
Move the goalposts	Change rules unfairly	They keep moving the goalposts.
Score points	Gain approval	He was trying to score points with the boss.
Own goal	Action that harms yourself	That rude statement was an own goal.
Kick off	Begin	The conference kicks off at nine.
Kick something into touch	Reject or postpone something	They kicked the proposal into touch.
Take your eye off the ball	Lose focus	We took our eye off the ball and missed the deadline.
Saved by the bell	Rescued at the last moment	The teacher changed topics and I was saved by the bell.
Below the belt	Unfair or cruel	That personal comment was below the belt.
Roll with the punches	Adapt to difficulties	Small businesses must roll with the punches.
Beat someone to the punch	Act before someone else	Our competitor beat us to the punch.
Punch above your weight	Perform better than expected	The small team punches above its weight.
Go the distance	Continue until completion	We are determined to go the distance.
Knockout blow	Decisive action causing defeat	Losing its biggest customer was a knockout blow.
On the ropes	Close to failure	The company is on the ropes.
Hit below the belt	Act unfairly	Bringing up her family was hitting below the belt.
Play your cards right	Act wisely to succeed	If you play your cards right, you may get promoted.
Put your cards on the table	Be open about intentions	Let us put our cards on the table.
Have an ace up your sleeve	Have a hidden advantage	Do not worry; we have an ace up our sleeve.
Hold all the cards	Control a situation	The buyer currently holds all the cards.

Idiom	Short Meaning	Example Sentence
Play your trump card	Use your strongest advantage	She played her trump card during negotiations.
Wild card	Unpredictable person or factor	Weather is the wild card.
Luck of the draw	Result determined by chance	Seating is simply the luck of the draw.
Call someone's bluff	Challenge a doubtful threat	She called his bluff.
Poker face	Expression showing no emotion	He kept a poker face during the announcement.
Up the ante	Increase risk or demands	The company upped the ante with a larger offer.
Raise the stakes	Increase importance or risk	The new deadline raised the stakes.
Hedge your bets	Reduce risk by keeping options open	She applied to several universities to hedge her bets.
Back the wrong horse	Support a losing person or idea	Investors backed the wrong horse.
Neck and neck	Very close in competition	The two candidates are neck and neck.
Ahead of the game	More advanced than others	Good planning keeps us ahead of the game.
Game plan	Strategy	What is our game plan for tomorrow?
Change the game	Transform a situation	Affordable batteries could change the game.
Throw a curveball	Present an unexpected difficulty	The interviewer threw me a curveball.
Home stretch	Final part of a task or race	We are in the home stretch now.
Down to the wire	Until the last possible moment	The contest went down to the wire.

25. More Common English Idioms

40 idioms in this section. Meanings are kept short so the table stays easy to scan.

Idiom	Short Meaning	Example Sentence
A blessing in disguise	Something bad that leads to good	Losing that job was a blessing in disguise.
A dime a dozen	Very common	Cheap phone cases are a dime a dozen.
A far cry from	Very different from	This apartment is a far cry from our old home.
A sight for sore eyes	Someone or something pleasant to see	You are a sight for sore eyes!
A stone's throw	Very short distance	The hotel is a stone's throw from the beach.
A taste of your own medicine	Same bad treatment you gave others	He finally got a taste of his own medicine.
All bark and no bite	Threatening but harmless	The supervisor is all bark and no bite.
All over the place	Disorganized or everywhere	My notes are all over the place.
All talk and no action	Makes promises but does nothing	He is all talk and no action.
At a loss	Unsure what to do or say	I was at a loss for words.
At arm's length	At a safe emotional distance	She keeps strangers at arm's length.
At odds	In disagreement	The two departments are at odds.
Back against the wall	In a difficult position	With our backs against the wall, we worked harder.
Back to basics	Return to fundamental ideas	The coach took the team back to basics.
Bend the rules	Slightly ignore rules	We cannot bend the rules for everyone.
Best of both worlds	Advantages of two situations	Remote work gives her the best of both worlds.
Bite your lip	Stop yourself reacting	I bit my lip and stayed quiet.
Blow your own trumpet	Boast about yourself	He loves blowing his own trumpet.
Break new ground	Do something innovative	The research breaks new ground.
By the book	According to rules	The inspector does everything by the book.
By word of mouth	Through personal recommendations	The restaurant grew by word of mouth.
Change of pace	Different activity from usual	Gardening gives me a change of pace.

Idiom	Short Meaning	Example Sentence
Cut corners	Save effort or money improperly	Builders should never cut corners on safety.
Cut someone some slack	Be less critical	Cut her some slack; she is new.
Draw the short straw	Get the least desirable task	I drew the short straw and cleaned up.
Face value	Apparent meaning	Do not take his claims at face value.
Fair and square	Honestly and according to rules	She won fair and square.
Far and wide	Over a large area	We searched far and wide.
Few and far between	Rare	Affordable apartments are few and far between.
From scratch	From the beginning	She made the cake from scratch.
Get a move on	Hurry	Get a move on or we will be late.
Get out of hand	Become uncontrollable	The celebration got out of hand.
Get the wrong end of the stick	Misunderstand	I think you got the wrong end of the stick.
Give someone the benefit of the doubt	Believe someone despite uncertainty	I will give him the benefit of the doubt.
Go cold turkey	Stop a habit completely	He quit sugary drinks cold turkey.
Go out on a limb	Take a risk	I will go out on a limb and predict a win.
Go pear-shaped	Go badly wrong	Our travel plans went pear-shaped.
Hands down	Easily	This is hands down the best option.
Have a chip on your shoulder	Hold resentment	He has a chip on his shoulder about his past.
Jump on the bandwagon	Follow a popular trend	Many companies jumped on the AI bandwagon.

26. Additional Daily Use Idioms

40 idioms in this section. Meanings are kept short so the table stays easy to scan.

Idiom	Short Meaning	Example Sentence
Above board	Honest and legal	All our business dealings are above board.
Across the board	Affecting everything or everyone	Prices increased across the board.
Against all odds	Despite great difficulty	She succeeded against all odds.
Ahead of the curve	More advanced than others	Their technology is ahead of the curve.
Alive and well	Still existing successfully	Traditional markets are alive and well.
All at sea	Confused	I was all at sea during the first lesson.
All or nothing	Complete success or complete failure	His strategy is all or nothing.
All set	Completely ready	We are all set for tomorrow.
All things considered	Considering everything	All things considered, it was a good year.
Another string to your bow	Another useful skill	Learning coding adds another string to your bow.
Any port in a storm	Any help is useful in difficulty	The hotel was basic, but any port in a storm.
At a glance	With a quick look	I could see the problem at a glance.
At a standstill	Completely stopped	Traffic came to a standstill.
At death's door	Extremely ill	He looked as if he were at death's door.
At loggerheads	In strong disagreement	The two groups are at loggerheads.
At loose ends	With nothing to do	I felt at loose ends after finishing the project.
At your fingertips	Easily available	All the information is at your fingertips.
Back and forth	Repeatedly between two sides	We emailed back and forth all morning.
Back in the saddle	Active again after a break	After vacation, I am back in the saddle.
Bad hair day	Day when things go badly	I am having a bad hair day.
Bang for your buck	Good value for money	This laptop gives good bang for your buck.
Be that as it may	Despite that	Be that as it may, we still need a solution.
Bear in mind	Remember	Bear in mind that prices may change.

Idiom	Short Meaning	Example Sentence
Behind someone's back	Without someone knowing	They discussed me behind my back.
Bells and whistles	Extra attractive features	I need a basic phone without bells and whistles.
Bend someone's arm	Persuade someone strongly	She bent my arm and I joined them.
Beside the point	Not relevant	His age is beside the point.
Bet your bottom dollar	Be completely certain	You can bet your bottom dollar she will arrive early.
Big fish in a small pond	Important person in a small group	He prefers being a big fish in a small pond.
Bigger picture	Wider situation	Look at the bigger picture.
Bite the hand that feeds you	Harm someone who helps you	Do not bite the hand that feeds you.
Blow something out of proportion	Make something seem more serious	The media blew the story out of proportion.
Break even	Neither profit nor lose	The shop just managed to break even.
Break the news	Tell important news	I had to break the news to the team.
Bury your head in the sand	Ignore a problem	You cannot bury your head in the sand forever.
By all means	Certainly	May I sit here? By all means.
By and large	Generally	By and large, customers are satisfied.
By leaps and bounds	Very quickly	Her English improved by leaps and bounds.
By the skin of your teeth	Only just	We caught the train by the skin of our teeth.
Carry the world on your shoulders	Worry about too many things	You cannot carry the world on your shoulders.

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