

# **250 English Idioms: Origins and Modern Usage**

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# Animal-Related Idioms

## 1. Let the Cat Out of the Bag

- **Origin:** In medieval markets, merchants would sometimes substitute cats for piglets in bags. Letting the cat out revealed the fraud.
- **Meaning:** To reveal a secret accidentally.
- **Modern Usage:** "I wanted the party to be a surprise, but Tom let the cat out of the bag."

## 2. Dog Days of Summer

- **Origin:** Ancient Romans called the hottest days of summer 'dies caniculares' (dog days) when Sirius, the Dog Star, rose with the sun.
- **Meaning:** The hottest period of summer.
- **Modern Usage:** "The dog days of summer are too hot for outdoor activities."

## 3. Bull in a China Shop

- **Origin:** Based on actual incidents of bulls running into china/porcelain shops in the 1800s.
- **Meaning:** Someone who is clumsy or causes damage in delicate situations.
- **Modern Usage:** "Don't send Jim to negotiate; he's like a bull in a china shop."

## 4. Bee's Knees

- **Origin:** Bees carry pollen on their knees, considered a valuable concentration of goodness.
- **Meaning:** Something excellent or high quality.
- **Modern Usage:** "This new restaurant is the bee's knees!"



## 5. Wild Goose Chase

- **Origin:** From horseback riding formations resembling flying geese, often futile to maintain.
- **Meaning:** A hopeless or useless pursuit.
- **Modern Usage:** "Looking for my keys in the park was a wild goose chase."

## 6. Kill Two Birds with One Stone

- **Origin:** From the ancient sport of slingshot hunting, where skilled hunters could hit multiple birds with one stone.
- **Meaning:** Accomplish two objectives with one action.
- **Modern Usage:** "I'll drop off the mail while grocery shopping - kill two birds with one stone."

## 7. Raining Cats and Dogs

- **Origin:** In old Northern European myths, Odin (often accompanied by dogs and wolves) was the god of storms, while witches, who took the form of cats, rode the wind.
- **Meaning:** Raining very heavily.
- **Modern Usage:** "Don't go out without an umbrella - it's raining cats and dogs!"

## 8. Horse of a Different Color

- **Origin:** Shakespeare's "Twelfth Night" used the phrase "a horse of that color" to mean "another matter entirely."
- **Meaning:** A completely different situation or circumstance.
- **Modern Usage:** "I thought we were discussing budget cuts, but employee benefits is a horse of a different color."



## 9. Crocodile Tears

- **Origin:** Ancient belief that crocodiles wept while eating their prey (though they do secrete liquid while eating).
- **Meaning:** Insincere display of sadness or remorse.
- **Modern Usage:** "Don't believe his crocodile tears - he's not really sorry."

## 10. Monkey Business

- **Origin:** From observing the playful but sometimes mischievous behavior of monkeys.
- **Meaning:** Silly or mischievous behavior; shenanigans.
- **Modern Usage:** "The teacher knew there was some monkey business going on in the back of the classroom."

## 11. Bird in Hand

- **Origin:** From medieval falconry, where a bird in hand was worth more than two in the bush (potential prey).
- **Meaning:** Something certain is better than the possibility of something better.
- **Modern Usage:** "Take the job offer - a bird in hand is worth two in the bush."

## 12. Get Your Ducks in a Row

- **Origin:** From the way mother ducks lead their ducklings in a straight line.
- **Meaning:** To organize and prepare thoroughly.
- **Modern Usage:** "Before the presentation, make sure you get your ducks in a row."



### 13. Pig in a Poke

- **Origin:** Medieval markets where piglets were sold in bags (pokes), sometimes fraudulently replaced with cats.
- **Meaning:** Buying something without inspecting it first.
- **Modern Usage:** "Don't buy that car without seeing it first - you don't want to buy a pig in a poke."

### 14. Like a Fish Out of Water

- **Origin:** Based on the literal observation of fish struggling on land.
- **Meaning:** Feeling uncomfortable in an unfamiliar situation.
- **Modern Usage:** "At the formal dinner party, Tom felt like a fish out of water."

### 15. Dog-Eared

- **Origin:** From the practice of folding page corners down, resembling a dog's drooping ears.
- **Meaning:** Pages that are worn or folded down from use.
- **Modern Usage:** "The dog-eared pages of his cookbook showed his favorite recipes."

### 16. Dark Horse

- **Origin:** From horse racing, where an unknown horse would be difficult to place odds on.
- **Meaning:** An unexpected competitor or winner.
- **Modern Usage:** "The dark horse candidate won the election, surprising everyone."



## 17. Chicken Out

- **Origin:** Based on the timid nature of chickens when faced with conflict.
- **Meaning:** To withdraw from something due to fear.
- **Modern Usage:** "He was going to ask her out but chickened out at the last minute."

## 18. Wolf in Sheep's Clothing

- **Origin:** From Aesop's fables about a wolf disguising itself as a sheep to catch prey.
- **Meaning:** Someone dangerous pretending to be harmless.
- **Modern Usage:** "Be careful of that smooth-talking salesman - he's a wolf in sheep's clothing."

## 19. Bear Market

- **Origin:** From the way a bear attacks by swiping downward with its paws.
- **Meaning:** A market characterized by falling prices.
- **Modern Usage:** "Investors are worried about the bear market affecting their portfolios."

## 20. Cat Got Your Tongue

- **Origin:** Possibly from the English Navy's use of the cat o' nine tails whip, which would render victims speechless.
- **Meaning:** Unable or unwilling to speak.
- **Modern Usage:** "What's wrong? Cat got your tongue?"



# Weather and Nature Idioms

## 21. Under the Weather

- **Origin:** From maritime tradition when sick sailors were sent below deck to recover, away from the weather.
- **Meaning:** Feeling ill or unwell.
- **Modern Usage:** "I can't come to work today - I'm feeling under the weather."

## 22. Storm in a Teacup

- **Origin:** From a Scottish proverb about a tempest (storm) in a teapot.
- **Meaning:** A big fuss about a small problem.
- **Modern Usage:** "The argument about the office coffee maker is just a storm in a teacup."

## 23. Break the Ice

- **Origin:** From ships breaking ice to clear trading routes.
- **Meaning:** To initiate social interaction or ease tension.
- **Modern Usage:** "The funny story helped break the ice at the meeting."

## 24. Head in the Clouds

- **Origin:** Based on the idea that someone distracted might be looking up at the clouds instead of where they're going.
- **Meaning:** Being unrealistic or daydreaming.
- **Modern Usage:** "Pay attention! You've had your head in the clouds all day."



## 25. Every Cloud Has a Silver Lining

- **Origin:** From Milton's poem "Comus" describing the sun's light behind clouds.
- **Meaning:** Every bad situation has some good aspect.
- **Modern Usage:** "You didn't get the job, but every cloud has a silver lining - now you can apply for that better position."

## 26. Rain on Someone's Parade

- **Origin:** Literal reference to rain spoiling a parade celebration.
- **Meaning:** To spoil someone's plans or happiness.
- **Modern Usage:** "I hate to rain on your parade, but the concert is sold out."

## 27. Calm Before the Storm

- **Origin:** From sailors' observations of weather patterns at sea.
- **Meaning:** A peaceful period before trouble or chaos.
- **Modern Usage:** "The office is quiet now, but it's just the calm before the storm of Monday meetings."

## 28. Take Root

- **Origin:** From plant behavior when establishing themselves in soil.
- **Meaning:** To become established or fixed.
- **Modern Usage:** "The new company policies have really taken root among employees."



### 29. Branch Out

- **Origin:** From the way trees grow new branches to expand.
- **Meaning:** To expand or try new things.
- **Modern Usage:** "After years in sales, she decided to branch out into marketing."

### 30. Turn Over a New Leaf

- **Origin:** Refers to turning to a new, clean page in a book (leaf = page).
- **Meaning:** To make a fresh start or change behavior.
- **Modern Usage:** "After the new year, Tom decided to turn over a new leaf and start exercising."

### 31. Steal Someone's Thunder

- **Origin:** From theater in 1704 when John Dennis invented a thunder sound effect that was stolen by another production.
- **Meaning:** To take credit for someone else's achievement.
- **Modern Usage:** "I was about to announce my engagement, but my sister stole my thunder by announcing hers first."

### 32. Lightning Never Strikes Twice

- **Origin:** Based on the incorrect belief that lightning wouldn't hit the same place twice.
- **Meaning:** The same unlikely event won't happen again.
- **Modern Usage:** "Don't worry about another computer crash - lightning never strikes twice."



### 33. Weather the Storm

- **Origin:** From sailing, where ships had to endure bad weather.
- **Meaning:** To survive a difficult period.
- **Modern Usage:** "The company weathered the storm of the recession and emerged stronger."

### 34. Snow Job

- **Origin:** 1940s American slang, referring to something that blinds or confuses like heavy snow.
- **Meaning:** An attempt to deceive or overwhelm with elaborate explanations.
- **Modern Usage:** "Don't give me a snow job - just tell me why you missed the deadline."

### 35. Make Hay While the Sun Shines

- **Origin:** From farming practice of cutting and drying hay in good weather.
- **Meaning:** Take advantage of favorable circumstances.
- **Modern Usage:** "The market is good now - make hay while the sun shines."

# Body Part Idioms

## 36. Cost an Arm and a Leg

- **Origin:** From portrait painters who charged more for full-body paintings including arms and legs.
- **Meaning:** Very expensive.
- **Modern Usage:** "That new smartphone costs an arm and a leg!"

## 37. Stick Your Neck Out

- **Origin:** From the vulnerability of animals extending their necks in dangerous situations.
- **Meaning:** Take a risk.
- **Modern Usage:** "He really stuck his neck out by defending me in the meeting."

## 38. Pull Someone's Leg

- **Origin:** From thieves tripping victims before robbing them.
- **Meaning:** To joke with or tease someone.
- **Modern Usage:** "Don't worry, I'm just pulling your leg about the deadline."

## 39. Get Cold Feet

- **Origin:** Possibly from soldiers getting cold feet in battle, making them want to retreat.
- **Meaning:** Become nervous about proceeding with something.
- **Modern Usage:** "He got cold feet just before proposing."



#### 40. Play it by Ear

- **Origin:** From musicians who can play music without reading the notes.
- **Meaning:** To improvise or proceed without a plan.
- **Modern Usage:** "I'm not sure about dinner - let's play it by ear."

#### 41. Keep Your Head Above Water

- **Origin:** From the literal act of swimming and staying afloat.
- **Meaning:** Barely managing to survive or cope.
- **Modern Usage:** "With all these bills, I'm barely keeping my head above water."

#### 42. Bite Off More Than You Can Chew

- **Origin:** From trying to eat too large a portion of food at once.
- **Meaning:** Take on more responsibility than you can handle.
- **Modern Usage:** "By volunteering for three committees, Sarah bit off more than she could chew."

#### 43. Face the Music

- **Origin:** From military tradition where disgraced officers faced the regimental band when being dismissed.
- **Meaning:** Accept the consequences of one's actions.
- **Modern Usage:** "After cheating on the test, he had to face the music with the principal."



#### 44. Give Someone the Cold Shoulder

- **Origin:** From serving unwanted guests cold shoulder of mutton instead of hot food.
- **Meaning:** To deliberately ignore or act coldly toward someone.
- **Modern Usage:** "Ever since the argument, Jim's been giving me the cold shoulder."

#### 45. Keep an Eye Out

- **Origin:** From military lookouts keeping watch.
- **Meaning:** To watch carefully for something or someone.
- **Modern Usage:** "Keep an eye out for sales when you're at the mall."

#### 46. Put Your Foot in Your Mouth

- **Origin:** From the embarrassing act of speaking while eating.
- **Meaning:** Say something embarrassing or inappropriate.
- **Modern Usage:** "When I mentioned her ex-boyfriend, I really put my foot in my mouth."

#### 47. All Ears

- **Origin:** From the act of turning one's head to hear better.
- **Meaning:** Listening attentively.
- **Modern Usage:** "Tell me about your trip - I'm all ears!"

#### 48. Get Something Off Your Chest

- **Origin:** From the sensation of relief after removing a weight from one's chest.
- **Meaning:** To confess or express something that's been troubling you.
- **Modern Usage:** "I need to get something off my chest - I was the one who broke the vase."



#### 49. Keep Your Hair On

- **Origin:** From the idea of getting so angry that one's wig might fall off.
- **Meaning:** Stay calm; don't get agitated.
- **Modern Usage:** "Keep your hair on! The computer will start working again soon."

#### 50. Neck and Neck

- **Origin:** From horse racing, when horses are running so close their necks are parallel.
- **Meaning:** Very close or equal in a competition.
- **Modern Usage:** "The two candidates are neck and neck in the polls."

# Food-Related Idioms

## 51. Piece of Cake

- **Origin:** From the 1870s when cakes were given as prizes in competitions for the easiest task.
- **Meaning:** Something very easy to do.
- **Modern Usage:** "The math test was a piece of cake!"

## 52. In a Nutshell

- **Origin:** From ancient Rome, where Pliny claimed Homer's Iliad was written on parchment small enough to fit in a nutshell.
- **Meaning:** To explain something concisely.
- **Modern Usage:** "In a nutshell, we need to increase sales by 10%."

## 53. Bring Home the Bacon

- **Origin:** From medieval fairs where men could win a side of bacon by swearing they hadn't argued with their wives for a year.
- **Meaning:** To earn money to support oneself or family.
- **Modern Usage:** "She's the one bringing home the bacon since her husband lost his job."

## 54. Spill the Beans

- **Origin:** From Ancient Greece where votes were cast using beans - spilling them revealed the results prematurely.
- **Meaning:** To reveal a secret.
- **Modern Usage:** "Come on, spill the beans about what happened at the meeting!"



### 55. Big Cheese

- **Origin:** From early 20th century slang where 'cheese' meant something first-rate or important.
- **Meaning:** An important person.
- **Modern Usage:** "Watch your behavior - the big cheese is visiting the office today."

### 56. Butter Someone Up

- **Origin:** From ancient India where people threw butter at statues of gods to seek favor.
- **Meaning:** To flatter someone excessively.
- **Modern Usage:** "He's just buttering up the boss to get a promotion."

### 57. Take It with a Grain of Salt

- **Origin:** From ancient Rome where a grain of salt was believed to help detect poison in food.
- **Meaning:** To view something with skepticism.
- **Modern Usage:** "Take his promises with a grain of salt - he often exaggerates."

### 58. Cup of Tea

- **Origin:** From British tea-drinking culture in the early 1900s.
- **Meaning:** Something that suits one's taste or interests.
- **Modern Usage:** "Horror movies aren't my cup of tea."



### 59. Eat Your Words

- **Origin:** From medieval times when people were forced to literally eat written words as punishment.
- **Meaning:** To admit being wrong about something you said.
- **Modern Usage:** "After the team won, he had to eat his words about them being losers."

### 60. Full of Beans

- **Origin:** From horses being energetic after eating beans.
- **Meaning:** Full of energy; lively.
- **Modern Usage:** "The kids are full of beans today - must be the excitement about the field trip."

### 61. Apple of One's Eye

- **Origin:** From the ancient belief that the pupil of the eye was a solid apple-shaped object.
- **Meaning:** Someone very precious or beloved.
- **Modern Usage:** "Her youngest grandson is the apple of her eye."

### 62. Cut the Mustard

- **Origin:** From the difficulty of cutting mustard seeds, which are tiny and hard to handle.
- **Meaning:** To meet expectations or standards.
- **Modern Usage:** "The new employee just doesn't cut the mustard."

### 63. Sell Like Hot Cakes

- **Origin:** From the 1800s when pancakes sold quickly at church fairs.
- **Meaning:** To sell very quickly and in large quantities.
- **Modern Usage:** "Those concert tickets are selling like hot cakes."



#### 64. Put All Your Eggs in One Basket

- **Origin:** From literal advice to farmers about spreading risk when transporting eggs.
- **Meaning:** To risk everything on a single venture.
- **Modern Usage:** "Don't put all your eggs in one basket - apply to several colleges."

#### 65. Cry Over Spilled Milk

- **Origin:** From European folklore about fairies crying over spilled milk.
- **Meaning:** To waste time worrying about past mistakes that can't be changed.
- **Modern Usage:** "The interview's over - no use crying over spilled milk."

#### 66. Hard Nut to Crack

- **Origin:** From the literal difficulty of cracking certain nuts to get to the edible part.
- **Meaning:** A difficult problem or person to deal with.
- **Modern Usage:** "This math problem is a hard nut to crack."

#### 67. Bread and Butter

- **Origin:** From basic food staples representing livelihood.
- **Meaning:** Main source of income; basic needs.
- **Modern Usage:** "Writing advertising copy is his bread and butter."



## 68. Cool as a Cucumber

- **Origin:** From the fact that cucumbers remain cool inside even in hot weather.
- **Meaning:** Very calm and composed.
- **Modern Usage:** "Despite the pressure, she remained cool as a cucumber during her presentation."

## 69. Take with a Pinch of Salt

- **Origin:** Same as "grain of salt" - ancient Romans believed salt could help detect poison.
- **Meaning:** To not take something too seriously or literally.
- **Modern Usage:** "Take his fishing stories with a pinch of salt."

## 70. Couch Potato

- **Origin:** 1970s slang combining 'couch' with 'potato' (associated with inactivity).
- **Meaning:** An inactive person who spends much time watching TV.
- **Modern Usage:** "He's turned into a real couch potato since getting that new gaming system."



# Historical/Cultural Idioms

## 71. Beat Around the Bush

- **Origin:** From hunting practices where beaters would circle bushes to flush out birds.
- **Meaning:** To avoid getting to the main point.
- **Modern Usage:** "Stop beating around the bush and tell me what happened."

## 72. Bite the Bullet

- **Origin:** From military medicine where patients bit on bullets during surgery without anesthesia.
- **Meaning:** To endure a painful or unpleasant situation.
- **Modern Usage:** "Just bite the bullet and get your dental checkup over with."

## 73. Turn a Blind Eye

- **Origin:** From Admiral Nelson, who allegedly used his blind eye to ignore a signal to withdraw in battle.
- **Meaning:** To deliberately ignore something.
- **Modern Usage:** "The manager turns a blind eye to employees taking long lunch breaks."

## 74. Red Tape

- **Origin:** From the red tape used to bind official documents in British government offices.
- **Meaning:** Excessive bureaucracy or regulations.
- **Modern Usage:** "Getting a building permit involves cutting through lots of red tape."



### 75. Paint the Town Red

- **Origin:** From 1837 when a group of hunters painted several buildings red in Melton Mowbray, England.
- **Meaning:** To go out and celebrate energetically.
- **Modern Usage:** "After graduation, we're going to paint the town red!"

### 76. Meet Your Waterloo

- **Origin:** From Napoleon's final defeat at the Battle of Waterloo.
- **Meaning:** To face a final, decisive defeat.
- **Modern Usage:** "The champion met his Waterloo against the young challenger."

### 77. Saved by the Bell

- **Origin:** From boxing, where a boxer about to lose could be 'saved' by the bell ending the round.
- **Meaning:** Rescued from a difficult situation at the last moment.
- **Modern Usage:** "I was saved by the bell when the fire alarm interrupted my presentation."

### 78. Read the Riot Act

- **Origin:** From a British law requiring officials to read a proclamation before dispersing riots.
- **Meaning:** To reprimand severely.
- **Modern Usage:** "The teacher read the riot act to students who skipped class."



## 79. Pass the Buck

- **Origin:** From poker, where a buckhorn knife marked the dealer - passing it meant shifting responsibility.
- **Meaning:** To shift responsibility to someone else.
- **Modern Usage:** "Don't pass the buck - this was your mistake."

## 80. White Elephant

- **Origin:** From Siam (Thailand), where rare white elephants were expensive gifts that were costly to maintain.
- **Meaning:** A troublesome possession that's expensive to maintain.
- **Modern Usage:** "That huge house became a white elephant after his income decreased."

## 81. Throw in the Towel

- **Origin:** From boxing, where throwing a towel into the ring signaled surrender.
- **Meaning:** To give up; to surrender.
- **Modern Usage:** "After three failed attempts, he threw in the towel on starting his business."

## 82. Rule of Thumb

- **Origin:** From craftsmen using their thumbs for rough measurements.
- **Meaning:** A general, informal principle.
- **Modern Usage:** "As a rule of thumb, save 20% of your monthly income."



### 83. Give the Cold Shoulder

- **Origin:** From medieval hosts serving cold shoulder of mutton to unwanted guests.
- **Meaning:** To deliberately ignore or act unfriendly.
- **Modern Usage:** "Since the argument, she's been giving me the cold shoulder."

### 84. Flash in the Pan

- **Origin:** From old firearms where gunpowder would flash but fail to fire the bullet.
- **Meaning:** Something that shows promise but fails to deliver.
- **Modern Usage:** "That new restaurant was just a flash in the pan - it closed after three months."

### 85. Barking Up the Wrong Tree

- **Origin:** From hunting dogs barking at the wrong tree where they thought prey was hiding.
- **Meaning:** To pursue a mistaken or misguided line of thought or action.
- **Modern Usage:** "If you think I'm responsible for the mistake, you're barking up the wrong tree."

### 86. Jump on the Bandwagon

- **Origin:** From political campaigns using bandwagons to attract attention, with people literally jumping aboard.
- **Meaning:** To join an activity that has become very popular.
- **Modern Usage:** "Everyone's jumping on the cryptocurrency bandwagon lately."



### 87. Caught Red-Handed

- **Origin:** From old Scottish law, referring to being caught with blood on your hands from poaching.
- **Meaning:** Caught in the act of doing something wrong.
- **Modern Usage:** "He was caught red-handed taking cookies from the jar."

### 88. Go Haywire

- **Origin:** From the unpredictable behavior of loose hay-baling wire.
- **Meaning:** To suddenly stop working properly; to go crazy.
- **Modern Usage:** "The computer went haywire just before the presentation."

### 89. Burning the Midnight Oil

- **Origin:** From the practice of using oil lamps to work late into the night.
- **Meaning:** Working very late.
- **Modern Usage:** "She's been burning the midnight oil to finish her thesis."

### 90. Hat Trick

- **Origin:** From cricket, where taking three wickets earned the bowler a new hat.
- **Meaning:** Three successes of the same kind.
- **Modern Usage:** "The striker scored a hat trick in the final match."



# Business/Money Idioms

## 91. Bang for Your Buck

- **Origin:** From military slang referring to firepower per dollar spent.
- **Meaning:** Value for money spent.
- **Modern Usage:** "This laptop gives you the most bang for your buck."

## 92. Break the Bank

- **Origin:** From gambling, when a player wins more money than the house has.
- **Meaning:** To be very expensive; to use all one's money.
- **Modern Usage:** "Let's go to the cheaper restaurant - we don't need to break the bank."

## 93. Cash Cow

- **Origin:** From dairy farming, where cows provided steady income through milk production.
- **Meaning:** A business or investment that generates steady profits.
- **Modern Usage:** "The iPhone has been Apple's cash cow for years."

## 94. Bottom Line

- **Origin:** From accounting, referring to the final total on a financial statement.
- **Meaning:** The final, most important point or result.
- **Modern Usage:** "The bottom line is we need to increase sales or cut costs."



### 95. Cut Corners

- **Origin:** From racing, where taking a shorter route by cutting corners was cheating.
- **Meaning:** To do something in the easiest or cheapest way.
- **Modern Usage:** "The contractor cut corners on the building materials."

### 96. In the Red

- **Origin:** From accounting practices of writing losses in red ink.
- **Meaning:** Operating at a loss; in debt.
- **Modern Usage:** "The business has been in the red for three consecutive quarters."

### 97. Penny Wise, Pound Foolish

- **Origin:** From British currency, criticizing those who save small amounts but waste larger ones.
- **Meaning:** Being careful with small amounts while being wasteful with larger ones.
- **Modern Usage:** "Refusing to service your car to save money is being penny wise, pound foolish."

### 98. Put Your Money Where Your Mouth Is

- **Origin:** From gambling, challenging someone to back up their claims with a bet.
- **Meaning:** To support your opinions with action or money.
- **Modern Usage:** "If you're so confident about the team, put your money where your mouth is and place a bet."



### 99. **Get Down to Brass Tacks**

- **Origin:** From fabric stores, where brass tacks in counters were used to measure cloth.
- **Meaning:** To focus on the essential details.
- **Modern Usage:** "Let's get down to brass tacks and discuss the project timeline."

### 100. **Bring Home the Bacon**

- **Origin:** From medieval fairs where winning a fitch of bacon was a prize.
- **Meaning:** To earn money to support oneself or family.
- **Modern Usage:** "He's working two jobs to bring home the bacon."

# Military/War Idioms

## 101. Keep Your Powder Dry

- **Origin:** From military orders to protect gunpowder from moisture to keep it useful.
- **Meaning:** Stay prepared; be ready for future challenges.
- **Modern Usage:** "Keep your powder dry - we might need your help later."

## 102. Don't Fire Until You See the Whites of Their Eyes

- **Origin:** Famous order from the Battle of Bunker Hill (1775) to conserve ammunition.
- **Meaning:** Wait for the perfect moment to act.
- **Modern Usage:** "Don't make your sales pitch until you see the whites of their eyes."

## 103. All Guns Blazing

- **Origin:** From naval warfare when ships would fire all cannons simultaneously.
- **Meaning:** With maximum effort or force.
- **Modern Usage:** "She went into the meeting all guns blazing."

## 104. Take No Prisoners

- **Origin:** From warfare, meaning to kill rather than capture enemy soldiers.
- **Meaning:** To act ruthlessly or uncompromisingly.
- **Modern Usage:** "The new manager takes no prisoners when it comes to meeting deadlines."



### 105. **On the Warpath**

- **Origin:** From Native American warfare preparation customs.
- **Meaning:** Very angry and ready for confrontation.
- **Modern Usage:** "Watch out - the boss is on the warpath about the missed deadline."

### 106. **Battle Stations**

- **Origin:** Naval command ordering crew to prepare for combat.
- **Meaning:** Get ready for urgent action.
- **Modern Usage:** "Battle stations, everyone - the client will be here in five minutes!"

### 107. **Over the Top**

- **Origin:** WWI phrase for soldiers leaving trenches to attack.
- **Meaning:** Excessive or extreme.
- **Modern Usage:** "The birthday party decorations were a bit over the top."

### 108. **Loose Cannon**

- **Origin:** From naval warfare, where a loose cannon on ship decks was dangerous.
- **Meaning:** An unpredictable person who causes trouble.
- **Modern Usage:** "Don't put Jim on the project - he's a loose cannon."

### 109. **Bite the Bullet**

- **Origin:** From soldiers biting bullets during surgery without anesthesia.
- **Meaning:** To endure something painful or unpleasant.
- **Modern Usage:** "Just bite the bullet and get your dental work done."



110. **Caught in the Crossfire**

- **Origin:** From battlefield situations where soldiers were caught between opposing forces.
- **Meaning:** Affected by a conflict between others.
- **Modern Usage:** "The small businesses were caught in the crossfire of the trade war."

# Maritime/Nautical Idioms

## 111. Learn the Ropes

- **Origin:** From sailing ships where new sailors had to learn about the various ropes controlling sails.
- **Meaning:** To learn the basics of something new.
- **Modern Usage:** "The new employee is still learning the ropes."

## 112. Three Sheets to the Wind

- **Origin:** From sailing terminology where 'sheets' are ropes controlling sails - if loose, the ship wobbles like a drunk person.
- **Meaning:** Very drunk.
- **Modern Usage:** "By midnight, he was three sheets to the wind."

## 113. Plain Sailing

- **Origin:** From navigation in clear weather conditions.
- **Meaning:** Easy progress without problems.
- **Modern Usage:** "Once we got the funding, it was plain sailing."

## 114. Show Your True Colors

- **Origin:** From ships flying false flags to deceive others before showing their true national colors.
- **Meaning:** Reveal one's true character or intentions.
- **Modern Usage:** "He finally showed his true colors during the crisis."



### 115. **Batten Down the Hatches**

- **Origin:** From securing ship hatches before storms.
- **Meaning:** Prepare for trouble.
- **Modern Usage:** "Batten down the hatches - the quarterly audit is coming."

### 116. **Take the Wind Out of Someone's Sails**

- **Origin:** From naval warfare where positioning upwind would steal another ship's wind.
- **Meaning:** To discourage or disappoint someone.
- **Modern Usage:** "The bad news really took the wind out of her sails."

### 117. **All Hands on Deck**

- **Origin:** Naval call for all sailors to come to the ship's deck during emergencies.
- **Meaning:** Everyone's help is needed.
- **Modern Usage:** "It's all hands on deck to finish this project by Friday."

### 118. **Know the Ropes**

- **Origin:** From experienced sailors who knew the purpose of all ship's ropes.
- **Meaning:** To understand how to do something.
- **Modern Usage:** "Don't worry about Jane - she knows the ropes."

### 119. **Weather the Storm**

- **Origin:** From ships surviving difficult weather conditions.
- **Meaning:** Survive a difficult period.
- **Modern Usage:** "The company weathered the storm of the recession."



## 120. **Sail Close to the Wind**

- **Origin:** From sailing near to the wind direction, risking capsizing.
- **Meaning:** To do something risky or barely legal.
- **Modern Usage:** "That investment strategy is sailing too close to the wind."

## 121. **Jump Ship**

- **Origin:** From sailors abandoning their vessel, often to join another crew.
- **Meaning:** To leave an organization, usually for a better opportunity.
- **Modern Usage:** "Half the team jumped ship to join the competitor."

## 122. **Rock the Boat**

- **Origin:** From the danger of moving suddenly in a small boat.
- **Meaning:** To disturb a stable situation.
- **Modern Usage:** "Don't rock the boat by bringing up old arguments."

## 123. **Even Keel**

- **Origin:** From a ship sailing steadily without listing to either side.
- **Meaning:** In a stable or balanced state.
- **Modern Usage:** "She keeps her emotions on an even keel."

## 124. **High and Dry**

- **Origin:** From ships stranded on shore by receding tides.
- **Meaning:** Stranded or abandoned without help.
- **Modern Usage:** "The budget cuts left the project high and dry."



### 125. **Run a Tight Ship**

- **Origin:** From strict naval discipline and efficient ship management.
- **Meaning:** To manage an organization strictly and efficiently.
- **Modern Usage:** "The new manager runs a tight ship."

### 126. **Pipe Down**

- **Origin:** From the boatswain's pipe used to signal sailors to go below deck.
- **Meaning:** Be quiet; stop talking.
- **Modern Usage:** "Pipe down! I'm trying to concentrate."

### 127. **Clear the Decks**

- **Origin:** Naval order to prepare ship's deck for action.
- **Meaning:** To prepare for activity by removing obstacles.
- **Modern Usage:** "Let's clear the decks before starting the new project."

### 128. **Sink or Swim**

- **Origin:** From the practice of throwing someone into water to teach swimming.
- **Meaning:** To succeed or fail by one's own efforts.
- **Modern Usage:** "In this competitive market, it's sink or swim."

### 129. **Push the Boat Out**

- **Origin:** From the literal act of launching a boat, requiring extra effort.
- **Meaning:** To spend more than usual on a special occasion.
- **Modern Usage:** "Let's push the boat out for Mom's birthday."



### 130. In the Same Boat

- **Origin:** From people sharing the same vessel and thus the same fate.
- **Meaning:** In the same difficult situation.
- **Modern Usage:** "We're all in the same boat with these budget cuts."

### 131. Hit It Out of the Park

- **Origin:** From baseball, referring to a home run.
- **Meaning:** To be extremely successful; to do something exceptionally well.
- **Modern Usage:** "Her presentation hit it out of the park."

### 132. Drop the Ball

- **Origin:** From baseball and other sports where dropping the ball is a mistake.
- **Meaning:** To make a mistake or fail to meet a responsibility.
- **Modern Usage:** "Sorry I forgot the meeting - I really dropped the ball."

### 133. Level Playing Field

- **Origin:** From sports where uneven ground gave unfair advantage.
- **Meaning:** A fair and equal situation for everyone.
- **Modern Usage:** "The new regulations create a level playing field for all businesses."



### 134. **Move the Goalposts**

- **Origin:** From sports where changing goal positions would alter game rules unfairly.
- **Meaning:** To change the rules or conditions after starting.
- **Modern Usage:** "Just when we meet the target, they move the goalposts."

### 135. **Game Face**

- **Origin:** From athletes' serious expressions before competition.
- **Meaning:** A serious, determined expression.
- **Modern Usage:** "Put your game face on - the clients are here."

### 136. **Ball's in Your Court**

- **Origin:** From tennis, when it's the other player's turn to hit back.
- **Meaning:** It's your turn to take action or make a decision.
- **Modern Usage:** "I've made my offer - the ball's in your court."

### 137. **Par for the Course**

- **Origin:** From golf, referring to the standard number of strokes for each hole.
- **Meaning:** What is normal or expected.
- **Modern Usage:** "Delays on this route are par for the course."

### 138. **Down for the Count**

- **Origin:** From boxing, when a knocked-down fighter is being counted out.
- **Meaning:** Defeated or out of action.
- **Modern Usage:** "After that flu, I was down for the count for a week."



### 139. Touch Base

- **Origin:** From baseball, where runners must touch bases to score.
- **Meaning:** To make contact or briefly communicate.
- **Modern Usage:** "Let's touch base next week about the project."

### 140. Front Runner

- **Origin:** From horse racing, referring to the horse in the lead.
- **Meaning:** The person or thing most likely to win or succeed.
- **Modern Usage:** "She's the front runner for the promotion."

### 141. Jump the Gun

- **Origin:** From racing, when an athlete starts before the starting gun.
- **Meaning:** To start something too early or without proper preparation.
- **Modern Usage:** "Don't jump the gun on announcing the merger - it's not final yet."

### 142. On the Ropes

- **Origin:** From boxing, when a fighter is against the ropes, nearly defeated.
- **Meaning:** In a difficult situation; close to failure.
- **Modern Usage:** "The company was on the ropes during the recession."

### 143. Get the Ball Rolling

- **Origin:** From games where rolling a ball initiates play.
- **Meaning:** To start an activity or process.
- **Modern Usage:** "Let's get the ball rolling on the new project."



144. **Hit Below the Belt**

- **Origin:** From boxing, where hitting below the belt is illegal.
- **Meaning:** To act unfairly or unethically.
- **Modern Usage:** "Bringing up his past mistakes was hitting below the belt."

145. **Keep Your Eye on the Ball**

- **Origin:** Basic advice in many ball sports.
- **Meaning:** Stay focused on your goal or task.
- **Modern Usage:** "Keep your eye on the ball and don't get distracted by office politics."

# Color and Light Idioms

## 146. Green with Envy

- **Origin:** From ancient Greeks associating green with physical illness caused by jealousy.
- **Meaning:** Very envious or jealous.
- **Modern Usage:** "She was green with envy when her friend got the promotion."

## 147. Black Sheep

- **Origin:** From shepherding, where black sheep's wool was less valuable.
- **Meaning:** The odd one out; family member who doesn't conform.
- **Modern Usage:** "He's always been the black sheep of the family."

## 148. Red-Letter Day

- **Origin:** From calendars marking saints' days and holidays in red.
- **Meaning:** A special or memorable day.
- **Modern Usage:** "Getting my driver's license was a red-letter day."

## 149. Out of the Blue

- **Origin:** From a clear blue sky, where something unexpected appears.
- **Meaning:** Unexpectedly, without warning.
- **Modern Usage:** "Out of the blue, she called after ten years."



### 150. **Golden Handshake**

- **Origin:** Modern business term from the 1960s.
- **Meaning:** A large sum of money given when leaving a job.
- **Modern Usage:** "The CEO received a golden handshake worth millions."

### 151. **True Colors**

- **Origin:** From ships showing their real flags after sailing under false ones.
- **Meaning:** One's real character or nature.
- **Modern Usage:** "During the crisis, he showed his true colors."

### 152. **White Lie**

- **Origin:** From the concept that white represents purity and innocence.
- **Meaning:** A harmless or minor lie.
- **Modern Usage:** "She told a white lie about liking his cooking."

### 153. **Paint the Town Red**

- **Origin:** From a notorious incident in 1837 when hunters painted buildings in Melton Mowbray red.
- **Meaning:** To celebrate energetically.
- **Modern Usage:** "After graduation, they painted the town red."

### 154. **Grey Area**

- **Origin:** From the visual concept of an unclear boundary between black and white.
- **Meaning:** An unclear situation lacking clear rules.
- **Modern Usage:** "The legality of the business practice falls into a grey area."



155. **Once in a Blue Moon**

- **Origin:** From the rare occurrence of a second full moon in a calendar month.
- **Meaning:** Very rarely.
- **Modern Usage:** "She only visits once in a blue moon."



# Technology/Modern Life Idioms

## 156. Pull the Plug

- **Origin:** From the act of disconnecting electrical appliances.
- **Meaning:** To stop or end something suddenly.
- **Modern Usage:** "They had to pull the plug on the failing project."

## 157. On the Same Wavelength

- **Origin:** From radio communication terminology.
- **Meaning:** Understanding each other well.
- **Modern Usage:** "We work well together because we're on the same wavelength."

## 158. Get Your Wires Crossed

- **Origin:** From early telephone and telegraph communication problems.
- **Meaning:** To misunderstand or miscommunicate.
- **Modern Usage:** "We got our wires crossed about the meeting time."

## 159. Up to Speed

- **Origin:** From machinery reaching optimal operating speed.
- **Meaning:** Fully informed or current.
- **Modern Usage:** "Let me bring you up to speed on recent developments."

## 160. In the Loop

- **Origin:** From feedback loops in electronic systems.
- **Meaning:** Kept informed about something.
- **Modern Usage:** "Keep me in the loop about the project's progress."



# Home and Lifestyle Idioms

## 161. Skeleton in the Closet

- **Origin:** From anatomy students allegedly hiding skeletons in closets during a time when using cadavers was illegal.
- **Meaning:** An embarrassing secret from one's past.
- **Modern Usage:** "Every family has a skeleton in the closet."

## 162. Put All Your Eggs in One Basket

- **Origin:** From the practical advice to farmers about carrying eggs.
- **Meaning:** To risk everything on a single venture.
- **Modern Usage:** "Don't put all your eggs in one basket by investing in just one stock."

## 163. Sweep Under the Carpet

- **Origin:** From the practice of hiding dirt by sweeping it under rugs.
- **Meaning:** To hide problems rather than deal with them.
- **Modern Usage:** "The company tried to sweep the accounting irregularities under the carpet."

## 164. Through the Roof

- **Origin:** From the concept of something rising beyond normal containment.
- **Meaning:** Prices or emotions rising extremely high.
- **Modern Usage:** "Housing prices have gone through the roof."



### 165. **Clean Slate**

- **Origin:** From chalk slates used in schools that could be wiped clean.
- **Meaning:** A fresh start without past problems.
- **Modern Usage:** "After bankruptcy, he was eager to start with a clean slate."

### 166. **Dirty Laundry**

- **Origin:** From the concept of keeping private things hidden like dirty clothes.
- **Meaning:** Private or embarrassing matters.
- **Modern Usage:** "Don't air your dirty laundry on social media."

### 167. **Window of Opportunity**

- **Origin:** From architecture where windows provided limited time for light.
- **Meaning:** A brief chance for action.
- **Modern Usage:** "The window of opportunity for investing is closing soon."

### 168. **Under One Roof**

- **Origin:** From the literal meaning of people living in the same house.
- **Meaning:** In the same place or building.
- **Modern Usage:** "The new mall has all the shops under one roof."

### 169. **Hit the Ceiling**

- **Origin:** From the image of something rising forcefully upward.
- **Meaning:** To become extremely angry.
- **Modern Usage:** "When he saw the damage, he hit the ceiling."



170. **Door to Door**

- **Origin:** From salespeople literally going from one house to another.
- **Meaning:** Visiting each place in sequence.
- **Modern Usage:** "They went door to door campaigning for votes."

# Time and Timing Idioms

## 171. **Beat the Clock**

- **Origin:** From game shows where contestants had to complete tasks before time ran out.
- **Meaning:** To finish something before a deadline.
- **Modern Usage:** "We're racing to beat the clock before the presentation."

## 172. **Eleventh Hour**

- **Origin:** From the Biblical parable of workers hired at the last hour (Matthew 20:6-9).
- **Meaning:** At the last possible moment.
- **Modern Usage:** "The contract was signed at the eleventh hour."

## 173. **Around the Clock**

- **Origin:** From the continuous motion of clock hands.
- **Meaning:** Continuously; all day and night.
- **Modern Usage:** "The emergency team works around the clock."

## 174. **Race Against Time**

- **Origin:** From the concept of competing against a time limit.
- **Meaning:** Trying to accomplish something before it's too late.
- **Modern Usage:** "Doctors were in a race against time to save the patient."



### 175. Like Clockwork

- **Origin:** From the reliable, precise nature of mechanical clocks.
- **Meaning:** Operating with perfect regularity.
- **Modern Usage:** "The trains in Japan run like clockwork."

### 176. Time Flies

- **Origin:** From Latin 'tempus fugit'.
- **Meaning:** Time passes quickly.
- **Modern Usage:** "Time flies when you're having fun."

### 177. In the Nick of Time

- **Origin:** From counting the nicks (notches) on a tally stick to measure time.
- **Meaning:** Just in time; at the last possible moment.
- **Modern Usage:** "The firefighters arrived in the nick of time."

### 178. Kill Time

- **Origin:** From the concept of making time pass when waiting.
- **Meaning:** To occupy oneself while waiting.
- **Modern Usage:** "I killed time at the airport by reading."

### 179. Time on Your Hands

- **Origin:** From having empty hands, indicating lack of work.
- **Meaning:** Free time; nothing to do.
- **Modern Usage:** "Since retiring, he's had too much time on his hands."



## 180. Against the Clock

- **Origin:** From timed competitions.
- **Meaning:** Working under time pressure.
- **Modern Usage:** "The team worked against the clock to meet the deadline."

## Relationship Idioms

### 181. Tie the Knot

- **Origin:** From ancient Roman custom of tying the couple's hands together during weddings.
- **Meaning:** To get married.
- **Modern Usage:** "They're planning to tie the knot next spring."

### 182. Third Wheel

- **Origin:** From the unnecessary third wheel on a bicycle built for two.
- **Meaning:** An unwanted person in a situation meant for two.
- **Modern Usage:** "I felt like a third wheel on their date."

### 183. Hit It Off

- **Origin:** From the idea of things working together smoothly without friction.
- **Meaning:** To get along well immediately.
- **Modern Usage:** "The new colleagues hit it off right away."



#### 184. **Under Someone's Thumb**

- **Origin:** From the practice of masters pressing their thumbs on servants' heads to show dominance.
- **Meaning:** Completely controlled by someone.
- **Modern Usage:** "He's completely under his boss's thumb."

#### 185. **Go Dutch**

- **Origin:** From a Dutch door split horizontally, with each half working independently.
- **Meaning:** Each person pays their own share.
- **Modern Usage:** "Let's go Dutch on dinner tonight."

#### 186. **Break the Ice**

- **Origin:** From ships breaking ice to clear trading routes.
- **Meaning:** To reduce social tension.
- **Modern Usage:** "The joke helped break the ice at the meeting."

#### 187. **Scratch Someone's Back**

- **Origin:** From mutual grooming behavior in primates.
- **Meaning:** Do a favor expecting one in return.
- **Modern Usage:** "You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours."

#### 188. **Give Someone the Cold Shoulder**

- **Origin:** From serving cold shoulder of mutton to unwanted guests.
- **Meaning:** To deliberately ignore someone.
- **Modern Usage:** "After the argument, she gave me the cold shoulder."

189. **Pop the Question**

- **Origin:** From the sudden nature of marriage proposals.
- **Meaning:** To propose marriage.
- **Modern Usage:** "He's planning to pop the question on Valentine's Day."

190. **Get Along Like a House on Fire**

- **Origin:** From the rapid and intense nature of house fires.
- **Meaning:** To have a very good relationship.
- **Modern Usage:** "The new roommates get along like a house on fire."

# Success and Achievement Idioms

## 191. Hit the Nail on the Head

- **Origin:** From carpentry, where accuracy is crucial for driving nails.
- **Meaning:** To describe exactly what is causing a situation or problem.
- **Modern Usage:** "You hit the nail on the head when you said we need better communication."

## 192. Ace in the Hole

- **Origin:** From poker, where a hidden ace gives a player an advantage.
- **Meaning:** A hidden advantage or resource.
- **Modern Usage:** "Her fluency in Chinese was her ace in the hole during negotiations."

## 193. Climb the Ladder

- **Origin:** From the metaphorical corporate ladder of success.
- **Meaning:** To advance in one's career.
- **Modern Usage:** "She quickly climbed the ladder from intern to manager."

## 194. Strike Gold

- **Origin:** From gold rush prospectors finding valuable deposits.
- **Meaning:** To become successful or find something valuable.
- **Modern Usage:** "The company struck gold with their new app."



### 195. **Raise the Bar**

- **Origin:** From high jumping in athletics.
- **Meaning:** To set higher standards.
- **Modern Usage:** "Their latest product has really raised the bar for the industry."

### 196. **Get Your Foot in the Door**

- **Origin:** From salespeople preventing doors from closing by putting their foot in.
- **Meaning:** To make a start in a career or organization.
- **Modern Usage:** "The internship helped him get his foot in the door at the law firm."

### 197. **Make Your Mark**

- **Origin:** From illiterate people signing documents with an 'X' mark.
- **Meaning:** To do something notable or memorable.
- **Modern Usage:** "She made her mark in the art world with her unique style."

### 198. **Break New Ground**

- **Origin:** From farming, referring to plowing uncultivated land.
- **Meaning:** To do something innovative.
- **Modern Usage:** "Their research is breaking new ground in cancer treatment."

### 199. **Go Places**

- **Origin:** From the literal meaning of traveling to achieve success.
- **Meaning:** To be successful or make progress.
- **Modern Usage:** "With her talent and drive, she's really going places."



200. **Cream of the Crop**

- **Origin:** From cream rising to the top of milk.
- **Meaning:** The best of a group.
- **Modern Usage:** "These students are the cream of the crop."

## Personal Qualities Idioms

### 201. Heart of Gold

- **Origin:** From the idea that gold represents something precious and pure.
- **Meaning:** A very kind and generous person.
- **Modern Usage:** "Despite his gruff exterior, he has a heart of gold."

### 202. Thick-Skinned

- **Origin:** From animals with tough hides that aren't easily hurt.
- **Meaning:** Not easily offended or upset.
- **Modern Usage:** "You need to be thick-skinned to work in customer service."

### 203. Wolf in Sheep's Clothing

- **Origin:** From Aesop's fable about a wolf disguising itself as a sheep.
- **Meaning:** Someone dangerous pretending to be harmless.
- **Modern Usage:** "That friendly salesman was a wolf in sheep's clothing."

### 204. Old Hand

- **Origin:** From experienced sailors who were skilled with their hands.
- **Meaning:** Someone with long experience.
- **Modern Usage:** "Don't worry about Jim - he's an old hand at this."



205. **Wet Behind the Ears**

- **Origin:** From newborn animals still wet from birth.
- **Meaning:** Young and inexperienced.
- **Modern Usage:** "The new intern is still wet behind the ears."

206. **Sharp as a Tack**

- **Origin:** From the pointedness and effectiveness of new tacks.
- **Meaning:** Very intelligent and quick-thinking.
- **Modern Usage:** "Even at 90, my grandmother is still as sharp as a tack."

207. **Straight Arrow**

- **Origin:** From arrows that fly true to their target.
- **Meaning:** An honest, straightforward person.
- **Modern Usage:** "You can trust Bob - he's a straight arrow."

208. **Cold Fish**

- **Origin:** From the cold-blooded nature of fish.
- **Meaning:** An unfriendly, unemotional person.
- **Modern Usage:** "I tried to chat with him, but he's such a cold fish."

209. **Live Wire**

- **Origin:** From electric wires carrying current.
- **Meaning:** An energetic, exciting person.
- **Modern Usage:** "That new sales rep is a real live wire."



210. **Cool Cat**

- **Origin:** From 1920s jazz culture.
- **Meaning:** A relaxed, fashionable person.
- **Modern Usage:** "Look at him with his new jacket - what a cool cat."

# Problem-Solving Idioms

## 211. Back to Square One

- **Origin:** From board games where players return to the starting square.
- **Meaning:** To start over completely.
- **Modern Usage:** "The experiment failed, so we're back to square one."

## 212. Think Outside the Box

- **Origin:** From the nine-dot puzzle requiring thinking beyond apparent limits.
- **Meaning:** Think creatively or unconventionally.
- **Modern Usage:** "To solve this, we need to think outside the box."

## 213. Put Your Heads Together

- **Origin:** From the physical act of people leaning their heads close to discuss.
- **Meaning:** To work together to solve a problem.
- **Modern Usage:** "Let's put our heads together and find a solution."

## 214. Piece of Cake

- **Origin:** From cake walks where prizes were easily won.
- **Meaning:** Very easy to do.
- **Modern Usage:** "The exam was a piece of cake."



### 215. Crack the Code

- **Origin:** From cryptography and code-breaking.
- **Meaning:** To find the solution to a difficult problem.
- **Modern Usage:** "We finally cracked the code on increasing sales."

### 216. Get to the Bottom Of

- **Origin:** From reaching the bottom of a container to find what's there.
- **Meaning:** To find the real cause of a problem.
- **Modern Usage:** "The detective vowed to get to the bottom of the mystery."

### 217. Iron Out

- **Origin:** From removing wrinkles from cloth with an iron.
- **Meaning:** To resolve problems or difficulties.
- **Modern Usage:** "We need to iron out these technical issues."

### 218. Draw a Blank

- **Origin:** From drawing a blank lottery ticket with no prize.
- **Meaning:** Unable to remember or think of something.
- **Modern Usage:** "When she asked for my phone number, I drew a blank."

### 219. Connect the Dots

- **Origin:** From children's puzzle books linking numbered dots.
- **Meaning:** To understand the relationship between different events.
- **Modern Usage:** "Once we connected the dots, the fraud became obvious."



220. **Cut the Gordian Knot**

- **Origin:** From Alexander the Great cutting an impossibly tangled knot.
- **Meaning:** Solve a complex problem with bold, decisive action.
- **Modern Usage:** "The CEO cut the Gordian knot by completely restructuring the department."



# Work and Career Idioms

## 221. Climb the Corporate Ladder

- **Origin:** From the metaphorical visualization of career advancement as climbing.
- **Meaning:** To advance in one's career hierarchy.
- **Modern Usage:** "She's determined to climb the corporate ladder quickly."

## 222. Learn the Ropes

- **Origin:** From sailing, where new sailors had to learn about different ropes controlling sails.
- **Meaning:** To learn how to do a job.
- **Modern Usage:** "Give him time - he's still learning the ropes."

## 223. Pull Your Weight

- **Origin:** From rowing, where each crew member must pull their share.
- **Meaning:** To do your fair share of work.
- **Modern Usage:** "Everyone needs to pull their weight on this project."

## 224. Dead End Job

- **Origin:** From roads that lead nowhere.
- **Meaning:** A job with no prospects for advancement.
- **Modern Usage:** "He quit his dead end job to start his own business."



## 225. Burn the Midnight Oil

- **Origin:** From studying late by lamplight.
- **Meaning:** Working late into the night.
- **Modern Usage:** "She's been burning the midnight oil to finish the report."

## 226. Cut Corners

- **Origin:** From taking shortcuts by cutting across corners.
- **Meaning:** To do something in the easiest or cheapest way.
- **Modern Usage:** "The contractor cut corners on the building materials."

## 227. Pink Slip

- **Origin:** From pink termination notices historically used in companies.
- **Meaning:** Notice of dismissal from employment.
- **Modern Usage:** "The whole department got pink slips during the downsizing."

## 228. Glass Ceiling

- **Origin:** From 1970s feminist movement describing invisible career barriers.
- **Meaning:** Unseen barrier to advancement in a profession.
- **Modern Usage:** "She broke through the glass ceiling to become CEO."



## 229. Go Through the Motions

- **Origin:** From performing actions without genuine effort.
- **Meaning:** To do something without real interest or effort.
- **Modern Usage:** "He's just going through the motions at work since his demotion."

## 230. Red Tape

- **Origin:** From the red tape used to bind official documents in Britain.
- **Meaning:** Excessive bureaucracy or regulations.
- **Modern Usage:** "Getting a building permit involves cutting through lots of red tape."

# Communication Idioms

## 231. Straight from the Horse's Mouth

- **Origin:** From examining horses' teeth to determine their age and health.
- **Meaning:** Information from the original source.
- **Modern Usage:** "I heard straight from the horse's mouth that the company is merging."

## 232. Read Between the Lines

- **Origin:** From reading secret messages written in invisible ink between lines of normal text.
- **Meaning:** To understand hidden meanings.
- **Modern Usage:** "If you read between the lines of his email, he's planning to quit."

## 233. Put in a Good Word

- **Origin:** From the practice of character references in medieval courts.
- **Meaning:** To speak favorably of someone.
- **Modern Usage:** "Could you put in a good word for me with the hiring manager?"

## 234. Get the Message

- **Origin:** From early telegram communication where messages were direct.
- **Meaning:** To understand what is being implied.
- **Modern Usage:** "When no one laughed at his jokes, he got the message."



### 235. **Word of Mouth**

- **Origin:** From information passing verbally from person to person.
- **Meaning:** Information spread by people telling each other.
- **Modern Usage:** "The restaurant became popular through word of mouth."

### 236. **Get Your Wires Crossed**

- **Origin:** From early telephone communication problems.
- **Meaning:** To misunderstand each other.
- **Modern Usage:** "We got our wires crossed about the meeting time."

### 237. **Keep Me Posted**

- **Origin:** From posting notices on public boards for information.
- **Meaning:** Keep me informed of developments.
- **Modern Usage:** "Keep me posted on how the negotiations go."

### 238. **Spread the Word**

- **Origin:** From religious evangelism spreading sacred texts.
- **Meaning:** To tell many people about something.
- **Modern Usage:** "Spread the word about the upcoming charity event."

### 239. **Get Your Point Across**

- **Origin:** From the idea of messages crossing physical distances.
- **Meaning:** To communicate your idea clearly.
- **Modern Usage:** "She used simple examples to get her point across."



240. **Breaking News**

- **Origin:** From interrupting regular broadcasts with important news.
- **Meaning:** Very recent, important news.
- **Modern Usage:** "Breaking news: The CEO has just resigned."



## Final Mixed Idioms

### 241. Steal the Show

- **Origin:** From theater when one performer outshines the stars.
- **Meaning:** To attract the most attention and praise.
- **Modern Usage:** "The young actress stole the show with her performance."

### 242. Last but Not Least

- **Origin:** From formal speaking traditions acknowledging all participants.
- **Meaning:** Final item is equally important.
- **Modern Usage:** "Last but not least, let's thank our volunteers."

### 243. Best Thing Since Sliced Bread

- **Origin:** From 1920s when sliced bread was considered revolutionary.
- **Meaning:** An excellent new innovation.
- **Modern Usage:** "This new app is the best thing since sliced bread."

### 244. Call It a Day

- **Origin:** From workers ending their daily work shift.
- **Meaning:** To stop an activity for the rest of the day.
- **Modern Usage:** "We've made good progress - let's call it a day."



### 245. **Take the Bull by the Horns**

- **Origin:** From cattle ranching and rodeo practices.
- **Meaning:** To face a difficult situation directly.
- **Modern Usage:** "She took the bull by the horns and confronted her boss."

### 246. **Give It Your Best Shot**

- **Origin:** From archery and target practice.
- **Meaning:** To try your hardest.
- **Modern Usage:** "I don't know if I'll win, but I'll give it my best shot."

### 247. **Back to the Drawing Board**

- **Origin:** From engineers returning to redesign failed projects.
- **Meaning:** To start over after failure.
- **Modern Usage:** "The design was rejected, so it's back to the drawing board."

### 248. **Get Your Act Together**

- **Origin:** From theater performers organizing their routines.
- **Meaning:** To organize yourself and perform better.
- **Modern Usage:** "You need to get your act together before the presentation."

### 249. **Leave No Stone Unturned**

- **Origin:** From an ancient Greek story about finding treasure.
- **Meaning:** To try every possible course of action.
- **Modern Usage:** "The detective left no stone unturned in solving the case."



250. **End of the Line**

- **Origin:** From railroad terminals where tracks end.
- **Meaning:** The final point or conclusion.
- **Modern Usage:** "After 30 years in business, it's the end of the line for the local store."