



Prepviso.com 100 Idioms (Figurative Expressions)

Idioms are phrases whose meaning is not literal. Use them to add colour to your writing!

1. A blessing in disguise

Def: Something bad that turns out to be good.

✿ *Missing the bus was a blessing in disguise – I met my old friend.*

2. A piece of cake

Def: Something very easy to do.

✿ *The maths test was a piece of cake for her.*

3. Add insult to injury

Def: Make a bad situation worse.

✿ *He lost his job, and to add insult to injury, his car broke down.*

4. Against the clock

Def: In a hurry to finish before a deadline.

✿ *We worked against the clock to submit the project on time.*

5. All ears

Def: Listening very attentively.

✿ *Tell me your secret – I'm all ears!*

6. Apple of my eye

Def: Someone dearly loved and cherished.

✿ *His youngest daughter is the apple of his eye.*

7. Back to square one

Def: Back to the starting point after failure.

✿ *Our plan failed, so we had to go back to square one.*

8. Barking up the wrong tree

Def: Looking for answers in the wrong place.

✿ *If you think I took your money, you're barking up the wrong tree.*

9. Beat around the bush

Def: Avoid saying something directly.

✿ *Stop beating around the bush and tell me what happened.*

10. Bite off more than you can chew

Def: Take on more responsibility than you can handle.

✿ *I bit off more than I could chew by volunteering for three projects.*

11. Bite the bullet

Def: Face a difficult situation bravely.

✿ *I had to bite the bullet and apologise to her.*

12. Break a leg

Def: Good luck (especially before a performance).

✿ *"Break a leg!" I wished my friend before her piano recital.*

13. Break the ice

Def: Start a conversation in a social setting.

✿ *A funny joke helped break the ice at the party.*

14. Burn the midnight oil

Def: Work or study late into the night.

✿ *I had to burn the midnight oil to finish my homework.*

15. By the skin of your teeth

Def: Only just barely succeed.

✿ *I passed the exam by the skin of my teeth – I scored exactly 50%.*

16. Call it a day

Def: Stop working for the day.

✿ *We were tired, so we decided to call it a day.*

17. Catch-22

Def: A dilemma with no good solution.

✿ *It's a catch-22: I need a job to get experience, but I need experience to get a job.*

18. Cost an arm and a leg

Def: Very expensive.

✿ *That designer bag costs an arm and a leg.*

19. Cross your fingers

Def: Hope that something turns out well.

✿ *I'm crossing my fingers that I get the scholarship.*

20. Cry over spilt milk

Def: Complain about something that can't be fixed.

✿ *There's no use crying over spilt milk – just clean it up.*

21. Curiosity killed the cat

Def: Being too curious can get you into trouble.

✿ *Don't ask too many questions – curiosity killed the cat.*

22. Cut corners

Def: Do something poorly to save time/money.

✿ *If you cut corners on safety, there will be accidents.*

23. Cut to the chase

Def: Get to the main point quickly.

✿ *Let's cut to the chase – did you win or lose?*

24. Down to the wire

Def: Until the very last moment.

✿ *The match went down to the wire, but we won.*

25. Drop in the bucket

Def: A very small amount compared to what is needed.

✿ *Our donation is just a drop in the bucket for the charity.*

26. Face the music

Def: Accept the consequences of your actions.

✿ *I broke the vase, so I had to face the music and tell my mum.*

27. Hit the nail on the head

Def: Describe exactly the right point.

✿ *You hit the nail on the head – that is the main problem.*

28. Hit the sack

Def: Go to bed to sleep.

✿ *I'm exhausted – I'm going to hit the sack.*

29. In the heat of the moment

Def: Acting without much thought; emotions are high.

✿ *In the heat of the moment, I said things I regretted.*

30. Jump on the bandwagon

Def: Join a popular trend or activity.

✿ *Everyone started learning coding, so I jumped on the bandwagon.*

31. Keep your chin up

Def: Stay positive and brave.

✿ *Keep your chin up – things will get better.*

32. Kill two birds with one stone

Def: Solve two problems with one action.

✿ *I walked to work to exercise and save money – killing two birds with one stone.*

33. Let sleeping dogs lie

Def: Don't stir up old problems.

✿ *We shouldn't bring up that argument again – let sleeping dogs lie.*

34. Make a long story short

Def: Summarise briefly.

✿ *To make a long story short, we missed the flight.*

35. Miss the boat

Def: Miss an opportunity.

✿ *I wanted to buy that house, but I missed the boat.*

36. On the ball

Def: Alert, competent, and quick to respond.

✿ *The new secretary is really on the ball.*

37. Once in a blue moon

Def: Very rarely.

✿ *I only eat fast food once in a blue moon.*

38. Out of the blue

Def: Completely unexpectedly.

✿ *Out of the blue, she announced she was moving to Japan.*

39. Play devil's advocate

Def: Argue the opposite point for the sake of discussion.

✿ *I'll play devil's advocate and ask – what if we are wrong?*

40. Pull someone's leg

Def: Tease or joke with someone.

✿ *I'm just pulling your leg – I didn't really lose your phone.*

41. Put yourself in someone's shoes

Def: Imagine how someone else feels.

✿ *Put yourself in her shoes – how would you feel?*

42. Ring a bell

Def: Sound familiar.

✿ *That name rings a bell, but I can't remember where I heard it.*

43. Spill the beans

Def: Reveal a secret.

✿ *Come on, spill the beans – what happened at the party?*

44. Steal someone's thunder

Def: Take credit for someone else's idea or success.

✿ *She stole my thunder by announcing my news first.*

45. Straight from the horse's mouth

Def: From the most reliable source.

✿ *I heard it straight from the horse's mouth – the boss confirmed it.*

46. Take it with a grain of salt

Def: Don't take it too seriously; it might be exaggerated.

✿ *He always tells tall tales, so take it with a grain of salt.*

47. The ball is in your court

Def: It is your turn to make a decision or act.

✿ *I've offered my help – now the ball is in your court.*

48. Under the weather

Def: Feeling slightly ill.

✿ *I'm feeling a bit under the weather, so I'll stay home.*

49. Up in the air

Def: Not yet decided or uncertain.

✿ *Our holiday plans are still up in the air.*

50. When pigs fly

Def: Something that will never happen.

✿ *He'll clean his room – when pigs fly!*

51. You can't have your cake and eat it too

Def: You can't have everything; choose one.

✿ *You can't have a fun job and earn millions – you can't have your cake and eat it too.*

52. A dime a dozen

Def: Very common, not special.

✿ *Coffee shops are a dime a dozen in this city.*

53. A leopard can't change its spots

Def: People can't change their basic nature.

✿ *He lied again – a leopard can't change its spots.*

54. As right as rain

Def: Perfectly fine, in good health.

✿ *After a good sleep, I felt as right as rain.*

55. At the drop of a hat

Def: Immediately, without hesitation.

✿ *She would help me at the drop of a hat.*

56. Between a rock and a hard place

Def: Facing two difficult choices.

✿ *I'm between a rock and a hard place – both options are bad.*

57. Bite your tongue

Def: Stop yourself from saying something hurtful.

✿ *I wanted to argue, but I bit my tongue.*

58. Blow off steam

Def: Do something to release anger or stress.

✿ *I went for a run to blow off steam.*

59. Break new ground

Def: Do something innovative, pioneer.

✿ *The scientist broke new ground with her discovery.*

60. Burn bridges

Def: Ruin a relationship or leave badly.

✿ *Don't burn bridges with your old colleagues – you might need them.*

61. Burst your bubble

Def: Disappoint someone by revealing the truth.

✿ *I hate to burst your bubble, but you didn't win.*

62. Close but no cigar

Def: Nearly successful, but not quite.

✿ *I almost got the high score – close but no cigar.*

63. Easy come, easy go

Def: Money or fortune gained quickly is often lost quickly.

✿ *He won money gambling, but lost it all – easy come, easy go.*

64. Get out of hand

Def: Become uncontrollable.

✿ *The party got out of hand, so we called the police.*

65. Give someone the cold shoulder

Def: Ignore someone deliberately.

✿ *She gave me the cold shoulder after our argument.*

66. Go the extra mile

Def: Do more than what is expected.

✿ *My teacher goes the extra mile to help us learn.*

67. Have a change of heart

Def: Change one's opinion or feelings.

✿ *He had a change of heart and decided to let us go.*

68. Head over heels

Def: Deeply in love.

✿ *He is head over heels for his new girlfriend.*

69. In the nick of time

Def: Just in time, at the last moment.

✿ *The ambulance arrived in the nick of time.*

70. Let your hair down

Def: Relax and have fun.

✿ *At the party, she finally let her hair down and danced.*

71. Lose your touch

Def: Lose your skill or ability.

✿ *I used to be good at chess, but I've lost my touch.*

72. Make ends meet

Def: Earn enough money to survive.

✿ *With three kids, it's hard to make ends meet.*

73. On thin ice

Def: In a risky situation, in trouble.

✿ *You're on thin ice after that mistake – don't do it again.*

74. Out of the frying pan and into the fire

Def: Go from a bad situation to a worse one.

✿ *I left my stressful job, but my new one is worse – out of the frying pan and into the fire.*

75. Play it by ear

Def: Act spontaneously, without a fixed plan.

✿ *We don't have a plan – let's just play it by ear.*

76. Pull yourself together

Def: Calm down and get control of yourself.

✿ *You need to pull yourself together and face the interview.*

77. See eye to eye

Def: Agree with someone.

✿ *My sister and I don't see eye to eye on politics.*

78. Sitting on the fence

Def: Not choosing a side, being neutral.

✿ *Stop sitting on the fence – whose side are you on?*

79. Speak of the devil

Def: When the person you were talking about appears.

✿ *Speak of the devil – here comes Mr. Tan now!*

80. The last straw

Def: The final problem in a series that makes you lose patience.

✿ *He was late again – that was the last straw.*

81. Turn a blind eye

Def: Deliberately ignore something wrong.

✿ *The teacher turned a blind eye to the students whispering.*

82. Walk on eggshells

Def: Be very careful not to upset someone.

✿ *I always walk on eggshells around my grumpy boss.*

83. Wear your heart on your sleeve

Def: Show your emotions openly.

✿ *She wears her heart on her sleeve – you always know how she feels.*

84. Wild goose chase

Def: A hopeless search for something that doesn't exist.

✿ *They sent us on a wild goose chase looking for a ghost.*

85. Get cold feet

Def: Become too nervous to go through with something.

✿ *I got cold feet right before my big speech.*

86. Give the benefit of the doubt

Def: Believe someone's excuse without proof.

✿ *He seemed honest, so I gave him the benefit of the doubt.*

87. Cry wolf

Def: Give a false alarm; lie about danger.

✿ *If you cry wolf too often, nobody will believe you when it's real.*

88. Raining cats and dogs

Def: Raining very heavily.

✿ *We can't go out – it's raining cats and dogs.*

89. Steal the show

Def: Get all the attention and praise.

✿ *The little girl stole the show with her beautiful singing.*

90. Up your sleeve

Def: A secret plan or trick.

✿ *I have a few tricks up my sleeve for the competition.*

91. Rule of thumb

Def: A general principle or guideline.</