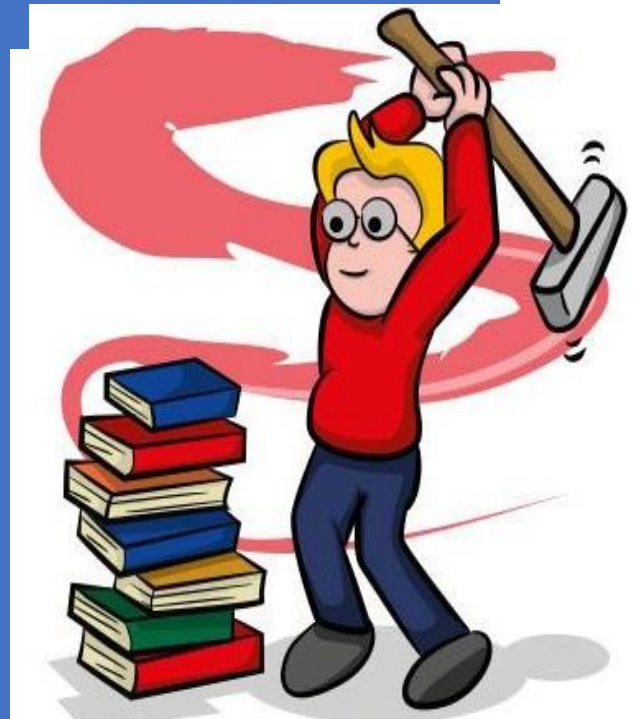


**A SELECTION OF**

# **ENGLISH IDIOMS**

**FOR CURIOUS  
STUDENTS**





**Srednja škola Ivan Švear Ivanić Grad**

# **A Selection of English Idioms for Curious Students**

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## Predgovor

Rutinske formule poput idioma ustaljene su u usmenoj i pisanoj komunikaciji. Smatraju se dijelom frazeološkoga fonda nekoga jezika jer se sastoje od najmanje dviju sastavnica, a odlikuju ih i ustaljenost (reproduktivnost), cjelovitost i čvrsta struktura. U jezičnim udžbenicima, u nevelikom broju, mogu se pronaći neki od idiomatskih izraza tipičnih za određene situacije koji olakšavaju stjecanje vještine korištenja stranoga jezika. Učenici su željeli obogatiti svoju komunikativnu kompetenciju koristeći alternativne jezične izraze koji obiluju slikovitošću istovremeno pružajući zabavu i razvijajući maštu.

*A Selection of English idioms for Curious Students* obuhvaća skoro dvije stotine engleskih idiomatskih rutinskih izraza prikupljenih iz različitih leksikografskih i medijskih izraza odabranih po željama učenika. Uz svaki od idioma navodi se njegovo objašnjenje na stranome jeziku, kao i primjer u određenom situacijskom kontekstu. Projekt je pomogao osposobljavanju učenika II. i razreda koji slušaju izborni predmet Engleski jezik za samostalnu i točnu upotrebu idioma u govoru i pismu na engleskom jeziku. Povezivanje i korištenje različitim tehnikama kreativnog izražavanja ispitalo je i vrednovalo postojeće ideje, ali i osmislilo nove ideje povezane s osobnim iskustvima i stručnim sadržajima vezanim uz strani jezik. Cilj projekta, zadovoljavanje interesa i potreba učenika za proširivanjem i stjecanjem novih znanja, uspješno je izvršen. Nadamo se da će ovaj mali rječnik odabranih idiomatskih izraza produbiti interes ostalih učenika za obogaćivanjem izraza u stranome jeziku.



# Idiom (id-i-om), *noun*

a group of words in a fixed order that has a particular meaning that is different from the meanings of each word on its own





## A

A needle in a haystack – trying to find something very well hidden: *"Finding the piece of paper I need in this huge pile of documents is like looking for/trying to find a needle in a haystack"*

A rainy day - to save for the future when it might suddenly be needed (unexpectedly): *"She had saved some money for a rainy day."*

Add insult to injury – bad things happening in an already bad situation: *"They told me I was too old for the job, and then to add insult to injury, they refused to pay my expenses!"*

Adding salt to the wound – making a situation worse than it is: *"To rub salt in the wounds, the bankers got big bonuses as the rest of us struggled to make ends meet."*

All's fair in love and war – in a situation important enough, anything goes: *"All advantages are fair in Love and War."*

## B

Back to square one - having to start all over again: *"All right, back to square one."*

Ball is in one's court – it's someone else's turn: *"I've helped him in every way I can – the ball is in his court now."*

Barking up the wrong tree - to make a mistake and look for a solution in the wrong place: *"He's been barking at the wrong tree."*

Be a breeze - to be very easy to do: *"This will be a breeze."*

Beat around the bush – attempt to avoid a difficult part of a conversation: *"I got to beat the bush."*

Before (or quicker) than you can say Jack Robinson - almost immediately: *"This will be easy... before you can say, Jack Robinson."*

Better late than never – it's good that something happened at all: *"Sorry Boss; but better late than never."*

Bite the bullet – to endure a difficult or painful situation, typically because something good is going to happen: *“You just gotta bite the bullet.”*

Bite your lip - prevent yourself from saying or reacting to something: *“He is upset. I can see him biting his lip.”*

Black sheep - a member of a group (or family) who is thought of as rebellious and other members disapprove of them: *“I don’t fell with the group. I’m like a black sheep there.”*

Blessing in disguise – an event that looks bad at first but turns out to be beneficial: *“I’m just like a blessing in disguise.”*

Break a leg – wish someone luck: *“Ok Son. Break a leg for me.”*

Break the ice - make people feel more comfortable: *“That joke broke the ice at the conference; we all relaxed afterward.”*

Burn bridges - destroy relationships: *“I must burn the bridge between them.”*

Bust one's chops – to exert a significant amount of energy or work very hard to do, accomplish, or complete something: *“I’ve been busting my chops to get this out by end of the day.”*

By the skin of one's teeth – to just barely get out of a situation: *“I got out of there by the skin of one’s teeth.”*

## C

Call it a day – decide or agree to stop doing something: *“I’m getting a bit tired now - let’s call it a day.”*

Call the shots - exercise authority or be in charge: *“He’s calling the shots, not me.”*

Calm before the storm - a peaceful period before something great happens, a difficulty or an argument: *“I like to get everything done before the guests arrive and relax for a moment in the calm before the storm.”*

Carry coals to Newcastle - to do something unnecessary: *"Great! Now we got to carry coals to Newcastle."*

Chase rainbows - when someone tries to do something that they will not achieve: *"Were you chasing rainbows or something?"*

Chicken out (of something) - withdraw from something due to fear or cowardice: *"Oh, are you going to chicken out now?"*

Come hell or high water – whatever happens: *"You can come hell or high water, I ain't going down so easily."*

Cry over spilled milk - feel regret about something that has been done and cannot be changed: *"Oh, don't cry over spilled milk, mate."*

Cut somebody some slack –not judge someone as severely as you usually would because they are having problems at present: *"Andrew's late again." "Cut him some slack - his wife just had a baby."*

Cut a long story short – stop telling details and get to the main facts: *"Yeah it's cool and all of that, but could you just cut to the story."*

## **D**

Don't judge a book by its cover – don't assume someone or something's intentions or personality traits at first look: *"You're mean. Don't judge a book by its cover."*

Double Dutch – something impossible to understand: *"Even I don't understand it myself. It's like a double Dutch."*

Doubting Thomas – a habitually doubtful person: *"I never took you for a Doubting Thomas."*

Dutch auction - an auction or sale that starts with a certain price that is then reduced until a buyer is found: *"Have you ever been to a Dutch auction?"*

## E

Easy does it – used to tell someone to do something slowly and carefully: *"Can I put it down now?" "Yes, but it's fragile so easy does it."*

Elephant in the room – a noticeable important matter that is ignored at first: *"I don't want to ask the question, but it is the big elephant in the room."*

Every cloud has a silver lining - every difficult or unpleasant situation has some advantage: *"Don't worry son, every cloud has a silver lining."*

Every Tom, Dick, and Harry – everyone, ordinary people in general: *"He didn't want every Tom, Dick, and Harry knowing their business."*

## F

For ages – when something continues for a long time: *"We were fighting this for ages and now we came out victorious."*

For Pete's sake! - exclamation of surprise or shock (syn. For the love of Mike! For goodness's sake! For heaven('s) sake!): *"For Pete's sake, hurry up!"*

French leave – a departure without ceremony, permission, or notice: *"Taking French leave, he evaded his creditors."*

## G

Get down to brass task – to discuss the essentials of the matter at hand: *"Get down to the brass task. We don't have much time."*

Get itchy feet - to want to travel or do something different: *"After three years in the job she began to get itchy feet."*

Get out of hand - get out of control: *"He's got out of hand. He doesn't know what he's doing."*

Get something off your chest – talk about something that worries you or causes a problem: *"I gotta get this off my chest... Alone."*

Get to the bottom of something – understand something completely: *“Could we get to the bottom of that.”*

Give a cold shoulder – to treat someone in an unfriendly way: *“He’s given us a cold should... let’s go.”*

Give the benefit of the doubt – to give someone a chance when it doesn’t seem you should: *“Come on, get up... I’m giving you a benefit of the doubt.”*

Go bananas – became crazy, silly: *“Sometimes you can go bananas, but don’t overdo it.”*

Go Dutch – to share costs: *“When we go out for a meal or on holiday, we share the cost and go Dutch.”*

Go on a wild goose chase - to do something without success or point: *“This is gonna be a wild goose chase.”*

Gone haywire/south – become wildly confused, out of control, or crazy: *“The plans for the party have gone haywire/south.”*

## **H**

Half-baked – poorly developed or carried out: *“Remember when you were a little kid and kept asking why and your parents gave you some half-baked answers?”*

Hang in there – to endure a little longer in a difficult situation: *“Hang in there, I’m coming for you!”*

Have one’s back – to help someone or take care of them: *“I got your back, brother.”*

High time - used to say it is time to do something that should have been done a long time ago: *“It’s high time we made some changes around here.”*

Hit the books – to begin to study hard: *“I have got to hit the books when I get home. There’s a big test tomorrow.”*

Hit the sack - go to sleep: *“Just hit the sack already. I see that you can barely walk on your feet.”*

Hot potato – a controversial issue or situation which is awkward to deal with: *“Dog registration has become a political hot potato.”*

## I

Ignorance is bliss – it’s better not to know something: *“He never keeps up with the news or cares about the troubles in the world because he believes that ignorance is bliss.”*

In for a penny, in for a pound – to finish an activity because you already started: *“If we already got in with a penny, we need to go with a pound.”*

In the same boat - in the same difficult situation as someone else: *“Do not despair: you are one of the millions in the same boat.”*

Indian summer – a period of warmer weather in late autumn: *“It’s like an Indian summer outside.”*

It takes two to tango – it takes two people to complete some action: *“You know what Jack, it takes two to tango, so... Let’s dance.”*

It’s all Greek to me – said when you don’t understand something: *“Yada, yada, yadda. This all Greek to me.”*

It's not rocket science - it's not complicated: *“Oh come on, it’s not rocket science. You can easily understand this.”*

It's raining cats and dogs - to rain heavily: *“It looks like it is going to rain cats and dogs soon.”*

## J

Jack of all trades – a person who can do many manual jobs: *“I am very glad that my husband is a Jack of all trades; it saved us a lot of money when it came to renovating our house.”*

Johnny-come-lately – a newcomer; a participant who started later than the others: *“Riley, whose father founded the industry, calls her competitors Johnny-come-lately.”*

Jump on the bandwagon – to follow a trend: *“I finally jumped on the bandwagon and bought a smartphone.”*

## K

Keep your fingers crossed – hoping things will happen the way you want: *“Helen will soon find out whether she got into law school; in the meantime, she is keeping her fingers crossed.”*

Keeping up with the Joneses - to always want to own the same expensive objects and do the same things as your friends or neighbors, because you’re worried about seeming less important socially than they are: *“Many people were holding down three jobs just to keep up with the Joneses.”*

Kick the bucket – informal, to die: *“His children were greedily waiting for him to kick the bucket.”*

Kill two birds with one stone – to solve two problems at once: *“He killed two birds with one stone by shopping and visiting the museum on the same trip.”*

## L

Learn by heart - to learn something in such a way that you can say it from memory: *“My father can still recite the poems he learned by heart at school.”*

Leave no stone unturned- look everywhere: *“Find them! I want every house checked and leave no stone unturned!”*

Let the cat out of the bag - give away a secret, usually without intending to: *“I was trying to keep the party a secret, but Mel went and let the cat out of the bag.”*

Live out of a suitcase - to stay in several places for a short time, never actually getting the time to unpack: *“I hate living out of a suitcase. For my next vacation, I want to go to just one place.”*

Long time no see – it has been a long time since they last met: *“Hello son, long time no see.”*

Lose your cool - to lose temper, become angry: *“He finally lost his cool with a photographer and threatened to hit him.”*

## M

Make a long story short – to provide just the basic facts rather than giving a lengthy explanation for something: *“To make a long story short, I ran into Tony and we decided to go to the game together.”*

Meet face to face – to meet someone in real life, as opposed to a call for example: *“We got to do this personally, face to face.”*

Misery loves company – it’s nice to have someone in the same situation as you when it’s a difficult one: *“On this day, misery loves our company.”*

## N

New York minute – very short period: *“He was down the stairs in a New York minute.”*

Nosey parker - a person who is too interested in what other people are doing: *“The village's resident noseyparker, Olive, likes to spy on her neighbors with binoculars.”*

Not my cup of tea - not for me, it isn’t something I like: *“That’s not my cup of tea, you should ask somebody else.”*

## O

On cloud nine - to be extremely happy: *“He was on cloud nine for days after being accepted.”*

On the fence – to not be able to decide between two choices: *“I don’t know, I’m kind of on the fence with this.”*

On thin ice – to do something that is dangerous and includes risk: *“This is dangerous, we’re on thin ice.”*

Once in a blue moon - not very often, rarely: *“These events happen once in a blue moon!”*

Out of hand – a situation is out of control: *“This situation is getting out of our hands; we should probably call someone else.”*



Out of the blue – suddenly, unexpectedly: *"We were shocked. All of this just happened out of the blue."*

## P

Piece of cake – something very easy to do: *"For him, taking tests is a piece of cake."*

Play devil's advocate – someone who pretends, in an argument or discussion, to be against an idea or plan that a lot of people support, to make people discuss and consider it in more detail: *"I don't really believe all that - I was just playing devil's advocate."*

Pull yourself together - calm down: *"Hey, pull yourself together. You need to finish your exam."*

Put/drive the final nail in the coffin – to finish something: *"He was already on his way to failure, but that was just the final nail in the coffin."*

## Q

Quality time – time spent in a way where it was worth it: *"I and my son have been spending quality time together."*

Quick on the draw – to have a fast reaction: *"His reflexes are amazing; he's quick on the draw".*

Quick and dirty – to do something quickly, but thus badly: *"Don't do it all quick and dirty, try to put some quality into the equation."*

## R

Rock the boat – say or do something to disturb an existing situation and upset people: *"I don't want to rock the boat with my statements."*

Run like the wind - run fast: *"As soon as you hear the bell ring, run like the wind."*

Rusty – to become bad at something after a long time of not doing it: *"I haven't done this in a while, I'll be a bit rusty."*

## S

Shake a leg – hurry up: *"Come on, shake a leg."*

Slow and steady wins the race – the best results come from consistent gradual progress, not from the brief, intense effort: *"Don't rush, slow and steady wins the race."*

Smart Alec - a person who is irritating because they behave as if they know everything: *"The kid in the front row is a smart Alec, always being funny."*

So far so good – progress has been satisfactory up to now: *"How's the job going?" 'So far so good.'"*

Speak of the devil – used when someone who was just being talked about comes to the place where he/she's being talked about: *"Well speak of the devil, here he is!"*

See something through – to finish researching or exploring something: *"I have to see this through."*

Spill the beans – to tell a secret: *"I was trying to keep it a secret, but he spilled the beans."*

Spread like wildfire - to spread rapidly: *"This pandemic is spreading like wildfire."*

Stab one in the back – to betray someone: *"It was all going well until he stabbed me in the back. That was quite a shock."*

Steal my thunder - when someone takes attention away from someone else: *"Come on now, don't steal my thunder."*

## T

Take a rain check – politely decline an offer, with the implication that one may take it up at a later date: *"They wanted me to come along for the ride but I took a rain check."*

Take it or leave it – either accept or refuse the offer: *"Make the decision; take it or leave it."*

Take by surprise – to happen to (someone or something) unexpectedly, to surprise (someone or something): *"The organization was taken completely by surprise by the announcement."*

Take something with a grain of salt – to accept information without believing it fully: *“Listen to him but take it with a grain of salt.”*

Taste of one's own medicine – when someone feels the effects of something bad that they do to others: *“Finally, he received a taste of his own medicine.”*

That ship has sailed - it's too late: *“He thought he was early but didn't know that that ship has sailed.”*

The buck stops here - used to say that one accepts responsibility and will not try to give it to someone else: *“I'm willing to accept the blame for what happened. The buck stops here with me.”*

The last straw (the straw that breaks the camel's hump) – an event that finishes something that was already destined to end: *“He was already suffering, but that was the last straw.”*

The world is your oyster - you are in a position to take the opportunities that life has to offer: *“I can do anything I want to, the world's my oyster”*

Twist one's arm – to try to force someone to do something: *“My wife had to twist my arm to get me to apologize to my boss.”*

## U

Under the weather - when you aren't feeling well: *“I'm feeling under the weather. I think I'm getting a cold.”*

Uncharted waters – new and unknown area: *“The company is moving into uncharted waters with its Internet marketing campaign.”*

Uncle Sam –a personification of the US government: *“Uncle Sam wants you to join the Army*

## V

Vanish into thin air – to disappear without a trace: *“We were talking, but then he vanished into thin air.”*

Vicious circle – a repetition of events that lead to bad events: *“We should get out of this vicious circle.”*

Vice versa – (and) the opposite: *“I’ll help you, and vice versa.”*

## W

When in Rome do as the Romans do – behave however the people around you behave: *“I know you haven’t been here before so just do as the Romans do, okay?”*

Work your socks off – to work hard: *“I worked my socks off to get to where I am.”*

Wouldn't be caught dead doing/wearing something – to not want to do or wear something that you find embarrassing to be seen in: *“I wouldn’t be caught dead wearing Nikes.”*

Wrap one's head around something – to understand something, especially something strange or out of the ordinary; to accept something that one does not particularly want to accept: *“I just couldn't wrap my mind around what had happened.”*

## X

X marks the spot – when a map or such shows the exact location of something: *“You see this map? X marks the spot of the treasure.”*

X factor – a special and/or rare talent: *“His x factor is singing.”*

X – rated – unfit or inappropriate for a younger audience: *“Don’t show that movie, it’s X-rated!”*

## Y

Young Turk – a young and rebellious person, difficult to control: *“We tried to warn him but he’s a young Turk!”*

You can’t teach an old dog new tricks – you can’t change a person: *“He doesn’t listen; you can’t teach an old dog new tricks.”*

You can say that again – used to express complete agreement with something just said: *"She's in a bad mood."* *"You can say that again."*

## **Z**

Zip past – to go past someone or something very fast:

*"I used to see him zipping past on his motorbike each morning."*

Zero tolerance – no tolerance whatsoever: *"In this school, there is zero tolerance for bullying."*

Zip it (up) – shut up, stop talking: *"But Mom, I don't want to go!"*

*"Zip it, Charlie! You're going to math camp, and that's final!"*

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