

## IDIOMS AND PHRASES

An idiom is a fixed group of words with a special meaning which is different from the meanings of the individual words. It consists of two or more than two words, hence it is also a phrase. This is the reason we generally use the term 'idiom and phrase'. It is a pithy expression forming a conceptual unit but not a sentence.

- to rack your brain (= to think hard, something to do with brains)
- step in the face (= a physical blow to the face).

### A

1. **abound in /with** something ( to have a lot of something): The rivers here abound in/ with fish.
2. **above all** (most important of all): He is intelligent, laborious and above all, honest.
3. **a lot of** (a large number of persons or a large amount of something): A lot of people came to hear his speech.
4. **all at once** (suddenly): All at once the sky became dark and it began to rain.
5. **all the time** (during that period to show contrast): I wish he would stop smoking: he does it all the time.
6. **as if** (as it would be if something were true): I couldn't move my legs. It was as if they were stuck to the floor.
7. **ask after** (to ask for news about somebody and how they are): Did he ask after me in his letter?
8. **ask for** somebody (to say that you want to see or speak to somebody): There is an old lady at the door asking for you.
9. **ask for** something ( to say that you want somebody to give you something): Radhika asked for a new dress on her birthday.
10. **associated with** (related to): Bhikshu Nagarjuna and Arya Deva were associated with Nalanda University.
11. **at a stroke** (by a single action or decision): The officer dismissed him at the stroke of his pen.

- 12. at times** (sometimes): At times, my heart cries out with longing to see all these things!
- 13. at heart** (what one really feels or believes) – John appears to be rude, but at heart he is a very kind man.
- 14. at the eleventh hour** (at the last moment): The mob was getting out of control but at the eleventh hour the police arrived and controlled the situation.
- 15. at a stretch** (continuously, without interruption): My friend has marvellous power of concentration; he could study for ten hours at a stretch.
- 16. at one's heels** (very close, near): The criminals ran away with the booty quickly because the police were at their heels.
- 17. at large** (including a number of topics, people, etc. without distinction): He talked at large on the problems of mankind.

**B**

- 18. bad blood** (unfriendly feelings): The bad blood between the neighbours makes the social life unbearable.
- 19. back out of** (not to take part in something that has been agreed on): Sania Mirza backed out of the Australian Open Tournament due to her knee-injury.
- 20. beat about/around the bush** (not say directly): Stop beating about the bush and tell me directly what you need.
- 21. bent on/upon** (determined to do something) – He is bent on inflicting emotional injury to me.
- 22. beyond measure** (in a way that can't be counted or measured): I am grateful to you beyond measure for your help.
- 23. black and blue** (full of bruises): He lost his temper and beat his son black and blue.
- 24. bone of contention** (thing which causes people to quarrel): Kashmir has been a bone of contention between India and Pakistan for years.
- 25. break the ice** (to overcome the first shyness in a new situation): He broke the ice by inviting his new neighbour to dinner.
- 26. bring home to (someone)** (to prove something to someone in a way to make him believe): The sudden epidemic brought it home to the people the need of keeping the surroundings clean.
- 27. by and by** (after a short time): By and by everyone left the place.  
(soon): She will get better by and by.

**C**

28. **catch one's breath** (be so frightened/ amazed that one stops breathing for a few moments): The spectators caught their breath when the magician cut the baby into two pieces.
29. **carry on** (to have a long affair with): She has been carrying on with a young man for years.
30. **crack a joke** (to make a funny remark): The comedian in the concert went on cracking jokes.
31. **cock and bull story** (unbelievable story): As an excuse for being late, he told some cock and bull story.
32. **cold fish** (person who doesn't show much feeling or emotion) – I dislike the company of Mohan; he is a bit of a cold fish.
33. **come to light** (be discovered, made known esp. crime): The conspiracy that he hatched didn't come to light for many years.
34. **cup of tea** (the sort of thing or person one likes): I have never acted in films; it is not my cup of tea.
35. **cut and dried** (very clear and definite): I am not keeping any thing secret; the whole thing is cut and dried.
36. **cut short** (stop, put an end to): He cut his speech short because there was no time left.

**D**

37. **a dark horse** (a person about whose abilities little is known): No one could guess what his potential was; he turned out to be a dark horse.
38. **keep it dark** (to keep (something) secret): They have planned for future but they want to keep it dark.
39. **dawn on** (to become suddenly clear to (someone)): Realisation that he should work hard dawned on him.
40. **die hard** (to take a long time to disappear): Old habits die hard.
41. **dawn the drain** (completely wasted): We had to reject everything and start again - six months' work going down the drain.
42. **drop by** (to visit someone casually and without being invited): I will drop by on my way home, if time permits.
43. **do away with**: (to cause to amend, abolish): The management dare not do away with free school meals.
44. **drop out** (to leave school or college without completing the course): He dropped out in the second year without completing his management course.

**E**

45. **even so** (in spite of that): Ravi had been very ungrateful. Even so, Ranjan forgave him.
46. **every dog has his/its day**: (every unfortunate man eventually has his time of happiness or glory): After several failures John ultimately got success; every dog has his day.
47. **enough is enough** (to show that one will not endure any unsatisfactory situation any more): Stop quarrelling; enough is enough.
48. **early bird** (one who gets up early in the morning, one who is ahead of time): My son always gets up early in the morning: he is an early bird.
49. **easy come, easy go** (easily gained, quickly spent): Within a short period, he spent lavishly all the money won by gambling: as it is said, easy come, easy go.

**F**

50. **fair weather friend** (A person friendly with another person only when the things are going well): Most of the people you are associating with are only fair weather friends.
51. **far and near** (from distant and near places ): People came from far and near to see the fair .
52. **far and wide** (over a large area): The police searched far and wide for the murderer but were unable to find him.
53. **few and far between** (very rare and unusual): We searched for a good school in that area but it was few and far between
54. **first and foremost** (most important, firstly): it is our first and foremost duty to serve the cause of our nation.
55. **fall flat** (fail to impress or influence): The speech fell flat on the audience.
56. **for good** (for ever): The Britishers left India for good.
57. **fall a prey to** (to fall a victim to someone): The innocent man fell a prey to the evil designs of the cheat.

**G**

58. **get away with murder** (to do something wrong without being punished): You can't cheat me like that and get away with murder.
59. **get hold of** (grasp, hold in one's hand): Get hold of the string, otherwise you may fall.
60. **get rid of** (dispose of, especially when considered undesirable or worthless): We should get rid of all rubbish.
61. **get up** (to rise from the bed in the morning) - When do you get up?
62. **get the sack** (be dismissed from one's job): Many workers got the sack when the company ran into loss.
63. **gift of the gab** (ability to talk well): He has a gift of the gab and can hold his audience spell-bound.
64. **give up** (to stop doing or having something): She has given up the idea of becoming an actress.
65. **go down with** (become ill with): The children went down with measles one after the other.
66. **go ahead** (permission to do something): As soon as the ministry gave us the go-ahead signal, we launched the new project.
67. **go to any length** (do anything to achieve something): in order to safeguard the interest of the nation, I can go to any length.
68. **golden mean** (middle path, a balance between two extreme positions or ideas): You should not go to the extremes rather find a golden mean between the two.

**H**

69. **hall mark** (a symbol of improved quality): Clear and explicit expression is the hall mark of good writing.
70. **hands down** (to win easily): The opponents were weak, so the home side won the match hands down.
71. **hang on** (to continue trying to do something even though it is very difficult): Shoeb Akhtar was bowling with fire but the Indian openers hung on with sheer determination.
72. **hard and fast** (strict): No one is allowed to leave; it is a hard and fast rule of the hostel.
73. **have an eye for** (be interested in/ be a good judge of): You should go with Rakesh for purchasing; he has a good eye for bargain.

**74. have no say** (not have any authorities in making a decision): The teachers have no say in deciding who should be the secretary of the institute.

I

**75. in a bad way** (very bad, very ill): My father is in a bad way; he may not survive.

**76. in a flash** (very quickly, immediately): He solved the problem of mathematics in a flash.

**77. in a nut shell** (very briefly): I have no time: tell me in a nut shell about the incident.

**78. indulge in** (to allow yourself to have or do something, which is often bad for you but which you like): They were indulged in espionage.

**79. interfere with** (to get in the way of something): Don't let anything interfere with your training.

**80. in the air** (being discussed or thought about): He was the first person to raise the voice of protest against the management although it was in the air at the time.

**81. in the dark** (not knowing what is going on): We are still in the dark about what is going on in the family of Mr Sharma.

**82. in the soup** (in trouble): I have not prepared seriously for the examination: I am really in the soup.

**83. in a fix** (in a state of indecision): I couldn't decide whether to leave or stay; I was in a fix.

J

**84. Jack of all trades** (person who knows many kinds of work but is not good at any of them): He is Jack of all trades but master of none.

**85. jail-bird** ( a person who has spent a lot of time in prison): The judge didn't show any mercy to John because he was a notorious jail-bird.

**86. join forces** (join together/ become united): The two armies joined forces to fight with their common enemy.

**87. jokes apart/ aside** (speaking seriously): Jokes apart, we should do something to make the situation favourable.

**88. jump out of one's skin** (be suddenly very frightened): When I came to know about the attack of the enemy, I jumped out of my skin.

89. **jump the gun** (to start running before the starter's gun has fired): Though he was a good runner, he was disqualified for jumping the gun three times.
90. **just about** (almost): I will accompany you as far as the market; I have just about finished my work.
91. **just now** (a few moments ago): The thief can't be far away; he was here just now.
92. **just the thing** (the exact thing requested/needed): This jacket is just the thing I need for winter.
93. **jump to conclusion** (to arrive at a decision/conclusion without having evidence): Don't jump to conclusions; wait till we discuss the issue in detail.

**K**

94. **keep an eye on** (watch/guard): Would you mind keeping an eye on my luggage for a few minutes?
95. **keep body and soul together** (stay alive): My income is just enough to keep my body and soul together.
96. **keep in mind** (remember someone/something): Keep in mind that your examination is at hand.
97. **keep in touch with** (to remain in contact): He promised to keep in touch with us while he was abroad.
98. **keep one's fingers crossed** (to hope for good luck): I am keeping my fingers crossed with a hope to get a job.
99. **keep the ball rolling** (continue something): We keep the ball rolling from one activity to another to avoid feeling bored.
100. **knock it off** (to stop doing something): Stop singing; knock it off, will you?
101. **know by sight** (to recognise someone from his physical appearance): I know the man by sight but I'm sorry I don't know his name.
102. **know the ropes** (learn how something is done): In the beginning you may face difficulty, but you'll soon get to know the ropes.
103. **know something/ someone inside out** (know completely): I know this area inside out; I have lived here for ten years.

**L**

- 104. laughing stock** (something that is regarded as foolish and causes unkind laughter): He talked nonsense and made himself the laughing stock at the party.
- 105. lay waste**(destroy, ruin): The invading army laid waste the crops in the country side.
- 106. leap in the dark**(something one does without knowing it): My friend is willing to open a hotel, really it is a leap in the dark.
- 107. lion's share** (largest share): The leader of the gang took the lion's share of the booty.
- 108. look before you leap** (think about what will happen afterwards before you do something): Before taking any decision in this regards, it is very important for you to look before you leap.
- 109. look down on/upon** (to have or show a low opinion, to consider someone socially inferior or unimportant): The rich always look down upon the poor.
- 110. look after** (to take care of): The baby should be looked after properly.

**M**

- 111. maiden speech** (first speech one makes in parliament, a debating society): The speaker was looking nervoys as it was his maiden speech.
- 112. make a mountain out of a mole-hill** (make something appear to be more important than it is) It is an easy task for you. Don't make mountain out of a mole-hill.
- 113. make fun of** (laugh at; make jokes about): The students made fun of the salesman's dress.
- 114. milk of human kindness** (good feeling towards others): She helps the poor; she is full of the milk of human kindness.
- 115. mind one's own business** (not interfere in other people's concerns): One should not advise others frequently; one should mind one's own business.
- 116. man of letters** (a literary genius whose books and articles are respected): He started his literary career at a very young age but is now an acknowledged man of letters.
- 117. make one fire** (do courageous work, adventurous): I am amazed at your capacity for hard work and I wonder what makes you fire.
- 118. make up for** (to repay or compensate for): You will have to make up for the loss you have caused.



**N**

119. **narrow escape** (only just avoided danger): No sooner did we come out of the house than it collapsed; it was a narrow escape.
120. **neck to neck** (side by side, together): The two participants ran equally fast. They reached the finishing point neck to neck.
121. **nine day's wonder** (something which everybody talks about for a short time): The arrival of a new doctor in the village was a nine day's wonder.
122. **nip in the bud** (stop something before it develops): The government nipped the steps of the extremists in the bud.
123. **no doubt** (certainly): No doubt, he is the best doctor available in the town.
124. **no matter** (it makes no difference): No matter where the thief tries to hide, the police will find him out.
125. **no sweat** (there's no problem, it will be done easily): No sweat, I will do this work for you by tomorrow.
126. **null and void** (with reference to legal documents, no effective): since the cabinet didn't give approval, the new proposed law has become null and void.

**O**

127. **of late** (now-a-days): Of late, many girls have started dressing like boys.
128. **off and on** (not regularly, sometimes): He drops in off and on for a chat with me.
129. **off one's head** (crazy, insane): Anyone who thinks of such a nonsense plan must be off his mind.
130. **off the map** (difficult to get to, far from the main town): It is not easy to reach the village; it is right off the map.
131. **on board** (on plane, ship or train): The passengers were given warm welcome on board by the captain.
132. **on the eve of** (on the occasion of): All the guests arrived on the eve of his marriage.
133. **on that account** (because of that, for that reason): He is preparing for his examination; on that account, he will not go for a picnic.
134. **out of sight** (no longer visible): They watched the bus till it was out of sight.

**P**

- 135. pave the way** (make it easier for something to happen): The courage and dedication of the soldiers paved the way to success.
- 136. pay attention to** (look and listen carefully): Please pay attention to the instructions of the group leader.
- 137. played out** (finished, exhausted): By the time the runner reached the finishing point, he was completely played out.
- 138. put one's foot down** (be firm/ to insist on something): The children wanted to see the late night programme on TV, but the mother put her foot down and asked them to go to bed.
- 139. put on trial** (to lodge a legal case): Although John had not committed that crime, yet he was put on trial.
- 140. pros and cons** (consider the points for and against): The manager assured him to take a decision only after weighing the pros and cons of the matter.
- 141. put one on guard** (to alert someone): Seeing the dacoits, the watchman put the inmates of the house on guard.
- 142. put up with** (to tolerate): I can't put up with this insult.

**Q**

- 143. queer fish** (strange person): He would come with an umbrella in his hand even in winter; he is a queer fish.
- 144. quite a few** (many): Quite a few students were absent in our class today.
- 145. quite the thing** (fashionable, in fashion): Now-a-days to wear long hair is quite the thing.
- 146. quick of understanding** (intelligent, a person of sharp wit): The student grasped the subject easily, he was quick of understanding.

**R**

- 147. read between the lines** (to understand a meaning which is suggested but not openly stated): His speech seemed to be very simple on the surface but when you read between the lines you can find it was full of biting criticism.
- 148. red letter day** (golden day/ important day): The 15<sup>th</sup> of August is known as a red letter day in the history of India.

149. **red carpet welcome** (to give warm welcome): The President of India was given a red carpet welcome at the airport.
150. **rock bottom** (at the very lowest level): It is the right time to buy a car because the price has hit rock bottom now-a-days.
151. **run out of** (end/ consumed entirely): We ran out of petrol on our way to Agra.
152. **run into debt** (owe people money): Spend your money wisely; otherwise, you will soon run into debt.
153. **run of the mill** (ordinary): The film is not marvellous; it is a run of the mill one.
154. **run short of** (not having enough): Now-a-days, I am running short of money.
155. **rise to the occasion** (to show that one can deal with a difficult situation): The Indians rose to the occasion and fought the Britishers to the finish.
156. **run riot** (behave in a wild way): The police were called in as the crowd were running riot through the town.
157. **run for one's life** (run away as quickly as one can to save oneself): "Run for your life"! The guard shouted to the people to come out of the burning building.

**S**

158. **safe and sound** (safe, well): Everyone was happy to find the little boy safe and sound.
159. **face saving** (intended to save one's reputation): Finally, the company came to a face saving agreement with the workers.
160. **see through** (recognise the truth, false statement, deceiving persons): I can see through your tricks.
161. **set on** (to cause to attack or chase): The house-owner set the dog on the thief at midnight.
162. **shot in the dark** (wild guess, something done at random): I didn't know the correct answer, so I shot in the dark and to my surprise it was the correct answer.
163. **sick and tired of** (annoyed with something which happens frequently): I am sick and tired of the uninvited guests at the party.
164. **sleep a wink** (usually with negative: not): do not sleep even for a very short time): Because of the high sound of the loudspeaker, I couldn't sleep a wink throughout the night.

165. **slip of the tongue** (something one says without meaning to): I beg apology as it is the slip of the tongue.
166. **sow the seed of** (do something which still have result): The revolts of 1857 sowed the seed of Indian independent movement.
167. **stab in the back** (betray, be disloyal to): Never trust your enemies, they will stab you in the back.

**T**

168. **take account of** (pay attention to): We must take account of the situation before arriving at any decision.
169. **take care** (be careful): Always take care when you are driving a car.
170. **take charge of** (be in control): Mr Nehra will take charge of the office tomorrow.
171. **take the floor** (speak to an audience): The old man took the floor and impressed the audience.
172. **take to one's heels** (run away): Seeing the police, the thief took to his heels.
173. **take up arm** (get ready to fight): The farmers took up the arms against the price-hike.
174. **taken aback** (surprised): I was taken aback when my bosom friend betrayed me.
175. **then and there** (immediately): He returned the borrowed amount then and there when asked.
176. **to and fro** (from one place to another and back again): As he was emotionally disturbed, he walked to and fro on the verandah.

**U**

177. **under a cloud** (suspected of having done something wrong): The Principal punished the student under a cloud but no one could prove anything against him.
178. **under one's belt** (as part of one's experience): The actor has already got three successful films under his belt.
179. **under cover** (hidden or disguised): The police came at the place of the occurrence under the cover of darkness.

- 180. up in arm** (showing one's anger/ making a lot of noise and fuss): The audience were up in arms when the show was cancelled.
- 181. ups and downs** (period of good and bad luck): Everyone be ready to accept the ups and downs of life.
- 182. under the sun** (on earth): Everything conditioned under the sun is the creation of God.

**W**

- 183. wage war** (fight a war): The Indians waged the first war of Independence against the Britishers in 1857.
- 184. walk on air** (be extremely happy): After his grand success at the examination, he was seen walking on the air.
- 185. well to do** (rich): He comes from a well-to-do family.
- 186. wide off the mark** (far from the centre of target): His argument sounds impressive, but is wide off the mark.
- 187. with respect to** (in connection with): I would like to give an opinion with respect to this matter.
- 188. with open arms** (in a very friendly way): They welcomed the guests with open arms.
- 189. with one accord** (everyone together, without exception): The entire family stood up and faced the challenge with one accord.
- 190. within reach** (not far, easy to achieve or reach): You can afford a car; it is within your reach.