

COURSE 1: Idiomatic Expression (Idioms)

✓ What are idioms?

Definition

An **idiom** (also called **idiomatic expression**) is an expression, word, or phrase that has a figurative meaning conventionally understood by native speakers. This meaning is different from the literal meaning of the idiom's individual elements. In other words, idioms do not mean exactly what the words say. They have, however, hidden meaning. **Examples "Kick the bucket" and "Spill the beans"**

The meaning of these expressions is separate from the literal meaning or definition of the words of which they are made. Their meaning are however used figuratively. They mean respectively:

- "to die "
- "to tell people secret information"

✓ Lists of idioms

English has thousands of idioms. Here are some useful idioms arranged in different categories. (Age, animals, colors, crime, health, nature...etc)

1. Age:

- **Act one's age.** To be mature and not childish. **e.g: *Stop being childish and act your age.***
- **Age before beauty.** A phrase said to allow older people to go before younger ones. Now most often used humorously and usually said by a younger person to an older
- **Over the hill.** Too old to perform as well as before. **E.g : *You say you are over the hill, but see how you run as fast as your son!***

2. Animals

- **A little bird told me.** Said when you do not want to reveal the source of your information.e.g :
"How did you know the news?"
"Oh, a little bird told me."
- **As gentle as a lamb.** Said about kind , innocent, mild-mannered people. **E.g:** *She is as gentle as a lamb. That's why everybody likes her.*
- **Be a cold fish.** Be a person who is distant and unfeeling. E.g : *He rarely talks to his colleagues. He is a cold fish.*
- **Cash cow.** Someone or something which is a dependable source of appreciable amounts of money; a moneymaker. E.g : *The type writers production which had been their cash cow for so many years witnessed a collapse of sales.*
- **Take the bull by the horns.** To deal with a matter in a direct manner, especially to confront a difficulty rather than avoid it.e.g : *He was ready to take the bull by the horns and settle the problem he had with his partners.*

3. Nature

- **Beat around the bush.** To treat a topic, without mentioning its main points, often intentionally, because the topic is difficult or unpleasant. **E.g :** *Stop beating around the bush and tell me what the the problem is!*
- **Rain or shine.** (also come rain or shine) whatever happens; no matter whether it is rainy or sunny.
E.g : *I'll be on time, rain or shine.*
- **Sell ice to Eskimos.** To persuade people to go against their best interests or to accept something unnecessary or preposterous. e.g : *He is such a smooth talker, he could sell ice to Eskimos.*

4. Time

- **Rome wasn't built in a day.** Said to emphasize that great work takes time to do. Nothing of importance can be done in a short period of time. E.g: *Don't expect immediate outstanding earnings from your new business. Rome wasn't built in a day.*
- **Beat the clock.** To do something before a deadline. e.g : *They managed to beat the clock and arrive a few minutes before the conference started.*

5. Names

- **Call someone names.** To call someone by unpleasant, abusive or insulting names. e.g: *Because he called his teacher names, Bill was punished.*
- **Every Tom, Dick and Harry.** Said about something that is common knowledge to everybody. E.g : *Every Tom, Dick and Harry knows what happened.*

5- Religion

- **Better the devil you know.** (also better the devil you know than the devil you don't) it is sometimes better to deal with someone or thing you know than to deal with a new person or thing who could be even worse. E.g : *Nancy is such a difficult girl to work with, but better the devil you know.*
- **God forbid** (also Heaven forbid) said when you hope that something does not happen.e.g : *God forbid that they encounter a problem on their way home.*
- **God knows.** This idiom means "only God knows." Said when you have absolutely no knowledge of something. E.g : *God knows what he's going to do after his divorce.*

6- Home

- *a roof over his head.*
- **Home away from home.** (also home from home) a place where you are at ease as if you were at home. E.g : *When I used to visit her, it was really a real home away from home.*

- **Man's home is his castle.** This idiom suggests that people are free to do whatever they want to in their own home. E.g : *He was furious when they told him not to listen to his favorite music in his own home. He told them that a man's home is his castle.*
- **Men make houses, women make homes.** It's often the men who build or acquire houses for their families, but it's usually women who provide the things that make a house into a home. E.g : *When her husband bought the house, she took charge of decorating and tidying it up. It's true that men make houses, women make homes.*